

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF ONCE

Scripture: Hebrews 9:23-28.

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (i.e. the sacrifices of the Mosaic law); but the heavenly things themselves with better things than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; Not yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now in the meridian of time hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and he shall appear the second time, without sin unto salvation unto them that look for him.

By one offering Christ hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

A considerable portion of the letter to the Hebrews is devoted to tracing the analogy between the sacrifices and other observances of the law of Moses and the final and perfect sacrifice of the perfect man -- Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In order to do this the writer also traces the analogy between Christ's priesthood and the priesthood of the Levites under Aaron. He characterizes Jesus as the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, and argues the superiority of his priesthood from the fact that Abraham, the ancestor and father of all Israel (including the priestly tribe of Levi) paid homage and tithes of Melchisedec as to the higher priesthood.

The priesthood in the Levites in Israel was a hereditary priesthood. It was transmitted through the tribe of Levi. Since Jesus was not of Levi, but of Judah, his priesthood was not hereditary. Jesus had a different and a higher priesthood, after the order of Melchisedec. But the author points out that the same principle of a divine call to priesthood was maintained; that Jesus did not take this honor unto himself, but was appointed or call to it by God, who recognized Jesus as his Son, and gave him pre-eminence even over the angels, none of whom was worthy to occupy the place at his right hand.

Christ's priesthood was superior to the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites

in still another way. The priests and high priests of Levi were only temporary priests. Their priesthood lasted only during the period of their lifetime. At death, it passed to another. Jesus, on the other hand, "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Because he lives forever, his priesthood abides forever. It is eternal and unending. He "hath an unchangeable priesthood because he abideth forever."

Jesus differed from the priests of the Levite order in still another way. The Levitical priests were human. They were sinners. In a way, it was well that they were human. Being human, they could recognize and be aware of the needs of sinful people, because they themselves had been tempted, and had sinned. But because they were human and imperfect, it was necessary that they should first offer sacrifices for their own sins before they came into the tabernacle to offer gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people.

Jesus was human, as well as divine. He himself was compassed with infirmity. He was tempted in all points like as we, yet he remained without sin. He knew what it is to be a man; he knew what it is to be tempted and to struggle against that temptation. He is therefore able to succor all those of the human family who are tempted or who sin. He is both a merciful and a faithful high priest. Yet because he was perfect and without sin,

there was no need for him to offer any sacrifice for his own sins before he sacrificed himself for the sins of the people.

Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, the Levitical High Priest cleansed himself and the tabernacle with various ceremonial washings and sprinklings of the blood of the sacrifices. Then he entered the innermost room of the tabernacle, or the Holy of Holies, where God symbolically dwelt between the outspread wings of the cherubim on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. There he made other offerings for the sins of himself and of the people.

Again the writer carries the analogy forward. The high priest of the tabernacle offered these gifts and sacrifices as an example or shadow of heavenly things. Jesus offered his own life, his own blood, for the sins of the people; and by this one offering he entered -- not into the holy places made with hands which are the figures of the true -- not into the holy of holies in Israel's tabernacle, but into heaven itself, into the actual presence of God. There he "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," as a sign that he would no more have to stand before an altar -- as a sign that his work of redemption and atonement, once done, was finished for all time. The sacrifices of the tabernacle had to be repeated over and over again, day after day and year after year. Their cleansing was outward or ceremonial; the offering of sacrifices never changed the conscience, the heart, or the human nature. Men kept on sinning, and over and over again had to be purged of their sins by sacrifice. Jesus offered himself once. By one sacrifice of himself he entered into the holy place, even into the presence of God, where he ever lives to make intercession for us. By this one sacrifice he made possible a change in the hearts, the consciences, the nature of men.

The writer of the Hebrew letter repeats this idea of the ONE sacrifice to end all sacrifices several times for emphasis. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "He needeth not to offer sacrifice for his own sins, for he knew no sins; but for the sins of the people. And this he did once, when he offered up himself." "We are sanctified through the offering once of the body of Jesus Christ." "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of GodFor by one offering he hath perfect-

ed forever them that are sanctified." "Now where remission of these (i.e. sins) is, there is no more offering for sin." "Now once in the meridian of time hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

This sacrifice, made once and for all by Jesus, is efficacious for the whole human race. His atonement covers all who come to know him, who accept him as Savior, who have faith in him, who repent of their sins, who are buried with him in baptism, and who rise with him to the new life of the new birth. If these inadvertently sin again, and repent, the one sacrifice, made once and for all, is still efficacious for their sin. The ordinances of his church were designed as memorial symbols of this one perfect and eternal sacrifice. Baptism is a burial of the old man in a watery grave, and the resurrection of the new. The Lord's supper is a memorial meal, reminding us of his body and blood which were given for us in this one perfect sacrifice.

This one perfect sacrifice is also efficacious for all the peoples of earth who have lived and died without opportunity to hear of Jesus. By the atonement of this sacrifice they will all be resurrected, and brought to stand before God in the last day. This one sacrifice is also efficacious for infants who have died in their innocence, before the years of accountability; it cancels the penalties for "original sin," or the sin of Adam; it restores to little children the innocence which man had before the fall, before he knew good from evil.

There have been many attempts to substitute some other sacrifice for this sacrifice which Christ made once and for all -- to make men's salvation dependent upon the day-by-day and year-by-year sacrifice of Christ's body and blood upon an earthly altar -- to make that salvation dependent upon the intercession of some other person, or saint, or angel. The scriptures are plain. Christ offered himself ONCE. No other offering, no other mediator, no other savior is necessary. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men may be saved. Jesus himself said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door, By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." And Paul said: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; and behold, all things are become new." Christ offered himself once, and by one offering Christ hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.