

Jesus the Once-for-All Time Sacrifice for Sin

Sermon Series on Hebrews

Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

PALM SUNDAY, April 9, 2017

TEXT: Hebrews 9:1-28

This morning we celebrate the beginning of Holy Week as we continue in our spring New Testament series on Hebrews. The events of Holy Week are the most important events that



have ever taken place on planet earth. We remember Jesus' entrance into the city on Palm Sunday with loud hosannas from the swelling crowds. He teaches publicly in the temple courts. He gathers with His disciples on Thursday night and celebrates the Passover with them and reinterprets the central symbols of that meal around His own imminent death.

On Good Friday, we remember that He offers Himself once for all time to secure eternal forgiveness for all who believe, and His resurrection on Easter morning will prove these promises to be true.

This morning we celebrated the beginning of Holy Week with the palm procession of the children. Our family name, the Palmer family, is derived from this custom of those who made pilgrimage at one time, waved palms, and remembered Christ's actions. Some of you, as you saw the donkey coming in, were a bit concerned for various reasons, mostly because of the possibility of donkey dung in the sanctuary. Let me share with you briefly something exciting I learned this week about donkey dung. A University of Tel Aviv archaeologist, Erez Ben-Yosef, made a discovery that was revealed this week. The discovery was in Timnah, in the southern part of Israel, and in the context of these excavations they found some donkey dung. What you do with donkey dung if you are an archaeologist? You send it to a lab and you see how old it is. They thought maybe some Bedouins had been camping there recently, 20 or 30 years ago. Organic material in the dung was still preserved. They sent it to the lab, did radiocarbon dating, and they were shocked at the results. The results of this lab report came back that this donkey dung actually dated from the time of Solomon. What is so revolutionary about that piece of donkey dung is this: it becomes a datable artifact to locate the copper mines in the southern part of Israel as belonging to Solomon. Archaeologist who want to rewrite the Bible and say

that the great events of Scripture didn't happen are stopped in their tracks by this donkey dung, because it shows that this was a flourishing area during the time of David and Solomon. This donkey dung shows us that these were the copper mines, these were the facilities used for constructing the furnishings of the temple.

It connects directly with the topic before us for Holy Week in a somewhat unexpected way. Hebrews 9 invites us into a consideration of the high priestly ministry of Jesus into the more perfect sanctuary, the heavenly sanctuary of which the tabernacle, and later Solomon's temple, was a copy and a shadow of a heavenly reality, and as we retrace Holy Week, we come to look at the ministry of Jesus our Great High Priest. Hebrews 9 reflects and re-presents for us what Jesus was actually accomplishing during Holy Week. This re-presentation, re-description, allows us to re-appropriate this great truth into our lives. Hebrews 9 is built on the parallel between the earthly sanctuary as a place and the worship service that actually happened there daily and yearly, and then looks at that service in comparison with the heavenly worship service that takes place in a heavenly sanctuary. We want to follow Hebrews 9 and this description of the work of our Lord and Savior that takes place on Holy Week.

Hebrews 9 gives us a unique vantage point on these realities that we do not have in any other passage in the Scripture, and so we will need to pay close attention to this gifted writer as he



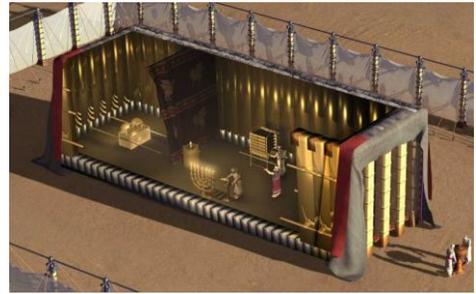
speaks and communicates to us. Keep your Bible open to Hebrews 9, and let's follow the progression through this lofty vision. The text begins by saying that even the first covenant, that is the covenant made on Mount Sinai, had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. In other words, the first covenant, the covenant that God made with His people when He brought them out of Egypt, had a sanctuary, and it had a worship

service that went with that sanctuary. Remember that Mount Sinai, when God met with His people after bringing them out of Egypt, was a place where heaven and earth met together in visible glory and that God commanded His people to remember that meeting on the mountain by, in a sense, laying the mountain on its side, and that the structure of the tabernacle, and later the temple, was in effect a portable Mount Sinai where the people were gathered at the base of the outer courts. The priests came into the Holy Place and the High Priest just up higher on the mountain where God dwells in visible glory. We need this picture in our minds. Hebrews 9:2 reminds us:

“For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and

the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.”

Moving from the outer court into this holy place, there was a curtain, a veil, defining a second section, the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. The tabernacle in the wilderness, the sanctuary proper, had these two sections: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. We will look in just a moment at the Holy Place, where the priests entered regularly and the Holy of Holies, where God's presence dwells and the High Priest would come once a year. As he moves inside, re-describing this for us, reminding us—those who were the original audience of Hebrews would have known these things very vividly—that inside the Holy of Holies, the Most Holy Place, there was the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold. The Ark of the Covenant had cherubim of glory



overshadowing this place that was called the Mercy Seat. The Ark of the Covenant was wrought with artistic skill. This was the place, the throne of God, and as the cherubim were overshadowing the Mercy Seat, that was the place where the blood of atonement would be set once a year by the High Priest. We need this all in our minds. Hebrews 9:5 says: *“Of these things*

we cannot now speak in detail.” He is assuming that we know all this, and at Kenwood I'm trusting that we do, because we have passed through this territory.

He says we cannot talk in detail about this because his main point is further on, so let's keep following along. The point is not that God gave His people a building or a place to worship, but the point is that the worship service took place there. It would be like imagining Christianity just by looking at church buildings and never knowing what happened in the building. N.T. Wright relates a story of meeting a Japanese student who had come to London as an international student and he wandered into a church building and had no idea what was happening. He saw people singing; he heard people speaking from the front. As near as he could tell, towards the end, most of the people came forward and received some kind of 'snack,' and then they left. As he was leaving, he saw N.T. Wright. He said he was wearing his 'dog collar' and he was putting some things together. The student looked at N.T. Wright, and he said: "Can you tell me about Jesus?" What a question! What matters more than the architecture is what really happens in there, and that's what Hebrews wants us to see. In Hebrews 9:6, he says:

“These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section,

performing their ritual duties,”

It is vital to remember there are two sections. The priests, the common priests, go regularly into that Holy Place. They go on a daily basis to perform their ritual duties, their priestly service.



Remember that *worship* is a verb. It is not just an idea. It is something that we do, and priests enter into that first section: they light lamps—rekindling them that they would never go out; they set forth the bread of the divine presence; they offer incense before the Lord; and this happens on a regular, daily basis. But into the second, Most Holy area, he reminds us, the High Priest goes, but just one time a year. There is a gradation of holiness: the Holy Place—regular access, the priests daily;

the Most Holy Place—the High Priest, just one time a year. Those of us who have been around Kenwood for a season will remember that what he is recalling here is that singular entrance into the Most Holy Place that took place on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, and we are to imagine and recall that ritual high point of the year when the High Priest actually came into the presence of the living God. He came one time a year; he entered to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the sin of the nation.

The writer of Hebrews wants us to see that in this structure, the Spirit of God was signaling something to us, signaling something profound. The Spirit of God was signaling to us that full access to God had not yet been manifested, that a veil separated the holy from the most holy, that gifts and sacrifices were offered that could not transform and change the worshiper, but they provided a purification and cleansing. This mode of worship would be in place until the time of reformation. Hebrews 9:1-10 then describes for us the way God's people worshiped for almost over 1500 years, every day, every month, every year. This was the pattern of worship, and it is vital that we see it. The writer of Hebrews wants us to see that, in a sense, the common priests and the High Priest in the Old Testament are holding in trust a coming ministry, and that the tabernacle, the temple, shows us that full access to God has not yet been displayed. There is an extraordinary development in Hebrews 9:11:

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation).

Jesus appeared, note that verb. In Hebrews 9:12, Jesus actually entered into the Holy Place, or the Most Holy Place, and He entered the very throne room of God, not with the blood of bulls and goats and calves, but bearing His very own blood. We need this liturgical worship design of the Old Testament or we won't understand what's happening on Palm Sunday and Good Friday.

We won't understand the entrance of Jesus into the sanctuary. Hebrews 9 tells us that when Jesus came into this world, He came as a sin-bearer, and when He offered Himself upon the cross, Hebrews invites us to consider that what was happening in the crucified Son of God outside the city of Jerusalem was actually Jesus Christ's passing through the heavens, a heavenly sanctuary, carrying the sin of the world, moving through the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies, and offering, not just the blood of a substitute, but offering His very own blood. The thrilling outcome of that is in the last phrase, that when He entered the sanctuary of heavenly glory, He did not secure an annual forgiveness of sins, but He secured an eternal redemption, that He entered once, for all time.

As you look and you see Christ crucified on the hill of Calvary outside the city, Hebrews wants you to lift your vision and consider what is actually taking place: Jesus comes once for all time with His own blood and obtains an eternal redemption. The Greek participle used in Hebrews 9:12 shows us that Christ didn't just find something, but that He obtained it. He secured it. He made the offering for sin, obtained redemption and now offers it to you and to me. Hebrews 9 wants us to know for certain that ~~if~~ the blood of bulls and goats and the sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer can secure a sanctification and purify our bodies. The Old Testament sacrifices were efficacious. They did cover the sin; they did purify the flesh, and this is what he wants us to see (and if you been around here for a while, you know what's coming)—if that was true, (and here comes this massive theological freight train of a *Qal va-homer*) if the blood of bulls and goats can make me clean, *how much more* can the shed blood of Jesus Christ who offered Himself blameless, without blemish, to God, how much more will the blood of Jesus Christ actually purify your conscience! It is almost too good to be true. Don't say you believe that too quickly. The shed blood of Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God, he says in Hebrews 9:14:

“. . . how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

How much more will that shed blood have an effect on you and me. I said last Sunday that whatever expectations you brought into the sanctuary of what God will do with you, they are too low, and they are still too low. I found mine this week too low: that the shed blood of Christ would change me; that it would renew my conscience. Look at the point of Christ's redemptive work—that our conscience is purified, renewed, made alive. We are rescued from dead works to serve the living God. The gospel makes us alive. Sometimes we forget that the point of Christ's redemption is that we are renewed so that we can serve God. Oh, what good things Jesus Christ has brought! Hebrews 9 says He has appeared; He is seen; He is the one bringing good things to come, and we strain to keep up with the beautiful vision of Christ's accomplishment. It is almost as though the writer knows that you and I are thinking that just seems impossible. Some of us who were here last Sunday know that this is a feature of the New

Covenant, that God will write His laws within us, that we would know Him, and that we would be forgiven. Hebrews 9, then, is assuring us with absolute certainty that as a result of Christ's offering once for all time that indeed, therefore, Hebrews 9:15:

“Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”

This has really happened. When we think of *mediator*, sometimes we think of conflict. Sometimes we think of a situation that needs mediation. The imagery of mediator of a covenant in the biblical world is not bringing parties together that are in conflict, but the image of the mediator is really the one who carries out the will, the one who secures or ratifies the covenant. That is what the rest of Hebrews 9 wants us to know for sure. He wants us to know that Jesus is the mediator, the one who ratifies, the one who brings into being and establishes forever this promised New Covenant. Jesus is this mediator, that those who are called may receive an eternal inheritance. Jesus' death on the cross not only atones for sin. His death on the cross also ratifies the New Covenant. He inaugurates this forever-agreement between God and His people.

Jumping to Hebrews 9:18, the writer says:

“Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.”

He wants us to go back to the scene at the base of Mount Sinai in Exodus 24. When every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to the people, Moses took blood of cows and goats and water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled the Book of the Covenant and all the people, saying: *“This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.”* The covenant was sealed in blood. The agreement was made real. Christianity does not have legal fiction at its center point. There is a reality and a certainty. The writer wants us to see that just as it was necessary for the copies, for the shadows, for the anti-types, of the heavenly things to be purified in this way, the heavenly things themselves, the reality of realities, would be sanctified with a better sacrifice than these. Here again is the beautiful description of what is really happening this week. In Hebrews 9:24, he says:

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

Can you see that? Jesus Christ has passed through the heavens, has come to the very throne of God. He has offered His own shed blood for you and for me, and now He is visible, appearing, standing in the presence of God on our behalf, and we read in Hebrews 9:25:

“Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own.”

This sacrifice for sins will never be repeated. Sometimes things are so significant that they happen once, forever. Jesus does not offer Himself repeatedly, but in Hebrews 9:26, we read:

“But now, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Notice the repetition of all these words of *seeing*. We need to *see* Him this morning. He has appeared once for all time, at the end, or literally, the culmination of the ages, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Oh, we need this assurance. Do you know how many people long to know that their sin has been put away forever? Some of you need to know this. People that are following the way of Islam struggle so hard on this point, because they have absolutely no assurance of forgiveness.

Hebrews 9 reminds us that Jesus’ once-for-all time sacrifice has removed our sin, put it away, banished it forever. Look at this ending—it’s extraordinary. He says in Hebrews 9:27:

“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,”

That’s how it is. That’s why Christians don’t believe in a karmic cycle or reincarnation. That is not a biblical worldview. That is not the teaching of Scripture. The Scripture says you get one life. You get one life, and after that one life you come before God and are judged. It is appointed for men to die once and after that the judgment, and we are all in that situation. So he says in Hebrews 9:28:

“. . . so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.”

Christ dies once to bear the sins of many, echoing the language of Isaiah 53. He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, not for judgment, but for salvation. He will come a second time to save; He will appear in visible glory to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. Oh, that’s good news! Do you see the change? It is appointed for mankind to die once and then to face the judgment of God, but for those who have believed in Jesus Christ, He has died once to bear the judgment that you face, and so as you look forward to His return, all you know is coming is the full disclosure of His salvation, and there is no need for fear. In full confidence and assurance we come to Holy Week.

When we fix our eyes on Jesus Christ this Holy week, what do we see? We see Him who gave Himself once for all time as a sacrifice for sins; we see Him who has obtained for us an eternal redemption, forgiveness, a rescue from sins of our past; we see Him who has gone in front of us and obtained and gives to us an eternal inheritance. So we look ahead with confidence and hope. We have a new past. We have a bright future, and in this present moment we are changed in the depths of our being; our conscience is purified; and we are renewed on the

inside. I don't know where else to go to find that news. This achievement of the cross is why we call Friday, *Good Friday*. It is Good Friday because it is the time when Christ accomplishes these glorious things: He sets the captives free and renews us to walk in God's ways.

This Tuesday, I've been invited to speak on how Jesus obtains freedom for us. I'm one of seven pastors that are going to be speaking at the Underground Railroad National Freedom Center on Tuesday night, and I can't wait. It will be a very visible picture of African-American pastors and some white pastors, and we are going to be signaling that humanity has been reconciled to God and with one another and that freedom has been obtained. I am really honored to be part of that. We each get a word from Christ to speak on, and I was given the word that Jesus says to the man on the cross: *"Today you will be with Me in paradise."* I thought: "Lord, I have a few thoughts on that!" How thrilling to announce these events in a public way. I'm looking forward to being with my African-American brothers on this day and celebrating the full ramifications of Christ's achievement. I've been reading and listening to some of some of the ways that they announce it. They have a different cadence, a different way sometimes, see different things. Just as we need Hebrews 9, we need the full body of Christ.

I want to close this morning with a with a portion of a sermon by a beloved African-American pastor with great name—Shadrach Meshach Lockridge. He served as the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church for 40 years. He thought about what was happening on Good Friday, and looking ahead at what's coming next, even as we look ahead this morning, Palm Sunday into Good Friday, this is the way he expressed it. He said:



"It's Friday. But Sunday's Comin'!

It's Friday. Jesus is praying. Peter's a sleeping. Judas is betraying. But Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. Pilate's struggling. The council is conspiring. The crowd is vilifying. They don't even know That Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The disciples are running Like sheep without a shepherd. Mary's crying. Peter is denying.

But they don't know That Sunday's a comin'.

It's Friday. The Romans beat my Jesus. They robe him in scarlet. They crown him with thorns.

But they don't know That Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. See Jesus walking to Calvary. His blood dripping. His body stumbling. And his spirit's burdened.

But you see, it's only Friday. Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The world's winning. People are sinning. And evil's grinning.

It's Friday. The soldiers nail my Savior's hands To the cross. They nail my Savior's feet to the cross. And then they raise him up next to criminals.

It's Friday. But let me tell you something Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The disciples are questioning. What has happened to their King. And the Pharisees are celebrating That their scheming has been achieved.

But they don't know It's only Friday. Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. He's hanging on the cross. Feeling forsaken by his Father. Left alone and dying. Can nobody save him? Ooooh It's Friday. But Sunday's comin'.

It's Friday. The earth trembles. The sky grows dark. My King yields his spirit.

It's Friday. Hope is lost. Death has won. Sin has conquered and Satan's just a laughin'.

It's Friday. Jesus is buried. A soldier stands guard. And a rock is rolled into place.

But it's Friday. It is only Friday. Sunday is a comin'!"

Will I see you there?

Lord Jesus, You have entered heavenly glory on our behalf. You have entered the sanctuary on high with Your own shed blood, and You have secured an eternal redemption for all who believe. This morning, we stand confident in assurance of forgiveness and new life and a purified conscience, and we look forward with hope and eager expectation that You will be appearing again, and we will see You bearing salvation. Oh, Lord, we have good news this week for us and for all the world! Lead us, Lord God, with humility and joy to Your cross.

Hallelujah, Amen!