

Sermon Transcript

03.29.2026

Hebrews 9:23-28

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- Good morning. Please open to Hebrews 9. We'll be finishing the chapter this week by looking at vss. 23-28.
- As you turn there, I want to tell you about what is quite possibly the greatest football team of all time. No, not the 72 Dolphins or the 85 Bears or the 92 Cowboys. In fact, not even American football at all, but what we call soccer.
- This is a team called the Raptors. Players include the children of Reformation members Josh and Sarah Reyna, Brian and Melissa Martin, Noah and Krista Culbertson, Thomas and Elise Freeland, and yours truly and Kaci Ashley.
- Led by our fearless coach Josh Reyna and assistant to the coach, yours truly, we are currently flying under the radar at 0-2.
- But we're about to go on a run like you can't even imagine. I knew it the first time I met one of our non-Reformation kids and he introduced himself by telling me that he was going to one day be better than Messi. Those are some large boots to fill...or in American, some large cleats to fill.
- Now, I wasn't there this past weekend, as I was on the Reformation men's camping trip, but I had Kaci take some pictures and film the game.
- Watching those videos was fun, but obviously not the same. I found myself conflicted about whether or not I wanted my son to score because I wanted to be there for that experience rather than just seeing it on a phone screen. A video is better than nothing, but the real thing is BETTER THAN better than nothing.
- Think of the concept of a video. It could be the video of a ballgame or your wedding or some other significant milestone. What makes that video special isn't the video itself, but the event which the video represents. The video is a representation of a greater reality, its a picture of something else.
- And that's what we should think about the old covenant rituals that the author has been describing in Hebrews. Although unlike our videos and photographs, those Mosaic rituals don't point backward, but forward in time, illustrating the future reality which Christ has now fulfilled.
- They serve a prophetic purpose in the OT in creating a conceptual awareness of some future redemptive fulfillment.
- As we've said before, we call this typology. The study of God-ordained parallels between the testaments which are marked by correspondence and escalation. By correspondence, we mean that the new is like the old. There is an analogy, a similarity.
- But by escalation, we mean it is not simply newer, but better. Christ isn't merely a new Passover lamb, but a better lamb. Not merely a new tabernacle, but a better one. Not merely a new David, but a better David. Not merely a new high priest, but a better priest.
- There is similarity, but also dissimilarity and that dissimilarity involves superiority.
- Again, this is called typology, from the Greek typos which is where we get the word typewriter. Most of us don't use a typewriter today, but we at least understand the concept. When you would type a key, a metal character would strike an ink ribbon against the paper. So when you hit the A key, an image of an A is impressed upon the paper.
- Well, typology is kinda like that. An impression or pattern struck is in redemptive history as an image to anticipate a greater fulfillment.

- And so the heart of the book beats around a series of typological references that show Christ's supremacy, Christ's superiority. Christ is better is the drumbeat of the book.
- Better than Moses and Joshua and the Sabbath and the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic covenant and the tabernacle.
- And if He's better, then going backward would be futile and foolish.
- But that's exactly the danger facing the original readers. They're being persecuted. And so they're tempted to escape the persecution by capitulating and compromising on the supremacy of Christ.
- There is at least the semblance of safety in the synagogue so they're tempted to go back. Back to Judaism, back to the old covenant, back to the Mosaic law, back to the sacrificial system.
- But there is no going back because shadows can't provide substance and as we've seen before, the altar is closed and that previous covenant is bankrupt and obsolete.
- So over the past few weeks we've seen this typological lens aimed at the tabernacle, which was like the archetype or prototype of the temple. BTW, notice the root word type in archetype and prototype. That should help you to better understand that typology concept of a picture of some future reality.
- So the author has described the tabernacle in the Mosaic covenant to compare and contrast it to what Christ has accomplished in the new covenant.
- We've seen that the tabernacle was made according to a very specific pattern. God was very clear in the OT that the tabernacle was to be designed exactly according to his divine specifications. And those specifications serve as a blueprint for the true tabernacle, a heavenly tabernacle, the actual dwelling place of God.
- In other words, the earthly tabernacle was a type, while the heavenly tabernacle is the anti-type. The temporary tabernacle made with hands was a picture that foreshadowed an eternal tabernacle not made with hands.
- We'll see that fleshed out further in our passage today so let's pray and then we'll dive in.
- Self, others, me.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 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. (Hebrews 9:23-24)

- The past few weeks, we've talked about the centrality of blood under the Mosaic covenant. Each and every day, a morning and evening sacrifice would be slaughtered and annually even more animals were offered on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.
- And that blood represented both life and death. Death for the beasts whose blood was shed, but life for Israel on whose behalf it was shed.
- So the blood would be offered outside the tabernacle and then taken into the tabernacle to make atonement and purification.
- For instance, in vss. 21-22 we read:
 - *And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:21-22)*
- So that was the ritual, but as we've said before, the Mosaic covenant was imperfect.
- Everything was covered with blood, but nothing was actually purified. Like a child who takes a bath, but uses neither soap nor shampoo so the Levitical system left everything wet and bloody, but nothing actually clean.

- And that wasn't an accidental oversight. As we've seen, the Levitical system was never intended to be the final resolution to the problem of man's sin. It was always insufficient and inefficient OR weak and useless as the author said in chapter 7. In fact, as we'll read in chapter 10, it was doomed from the start because human sin needs human blood.
- As chapter 10:4 says:
 - *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:4)
- And again, that's not something that God just figured out eventually. It isn't like He thought animal blood would suffice but He just never could quite figure out how to make it work. No, what the author is saying is that animal blood was never supposed to work. It was always intended to point to something beyond itself. Something better.
- As a diesel engine won't run on unleaded, so atonement can't function on the blood of beasts.
- The wages of sin is death, but that death has to involve one who is actually like us. An animal couldn't bear the weight of human sin. For that exchange, a human was necessary. But the problem is that all humanity is itself mired in sin and each sinner owes a debt for his own sin so he can't pay for another. So what's the solution? Enter Christ.
- As we've seen in the book, the Son is both God & man which is necessary since man is obligated to pay, but only God is able to make payment. And then not only is He man, but man untainted by sin...blameless, holy, innocent, unstained. He is, to use the language of the creed, like us in all respects, apart from sin. In other words, since He has no sin of His own which He must pay, He is able to make payment for us & since He is God, that recompense is of infinite value.
- That's the argument that Hebrews is making.
- But let's narrow the focus here in ch 9. Starting in 23-24, the author argues that since Christ is a better priest ministering in a better temple, therefore that better temple needs better cleansing & that points to a better sacrifice & better blood. That's the 30K ft view of the author's argument.
- A better temple needs a better cleansing which means better blood is necessary.
- And he makes this argument through the use of analogy.
- He calls the earthly tabernacle a copy which is a term he's used before. We saw it back in chap 8
 - *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."* (Hebrews 8:5)
- And notice how this ties into typology. Copy, shadow, pattern, type, image, these are all different ways of referring to the same concept. Certain OT persons and events and institutions and even buildings are designed to point beyond themselves to a future fulfillment. That's typology.
- So the tabernacle that Israel used was a representation of something more substantial.
- And the particular word *copy* that he uses is interesting in that its sometimes translated as example. For example, in John 13:15
 - *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* (John 13:15)
- What happens in the context of John 13? Jesus washes the disciples' feet. Well, that's a picture, an illustration, an example of some greater reality.
- That's what the author is saying of the tabernacle. It points beyond itself to a greater reality. It functions as a framework to help us to better understand the work of Christ. We saw in the previous passage that the tabernacle was purified by various rites involving blood and hyssop and water and so forth.
- And the point is that if the lesser copy required purification, then so does the greater real thing. And since its a better substance, it needs a better sacrifice.
- So what is this better tabernacle? This fulfillment? What is this anti-type to which the tabernacle pointed?

- The author contrasts the holy place made with hands, which is a copy of heaven, with heaven itself. In other words, the tabernacle was a Xerox of heaven and heaven itself is the ultimate reality which the tabernacle symbolized, the dwelling place of God.
- And a couple of weeks back we talked about the significance of the phrase “made with hands.” We talked about how in the OT, that phrase was almost exclusively used with a derogatory connotation, particularly in the context of idols which were made by human hands. And in the NT, that phrase is used almost exclusively derogatorily as well, but now its applied to OT rituals. Now, obviously, the tabernacle wasn’t an idol, it was commanded by God to be made. So what’s the connection? Why is there a negative connotation to the tabernacle here?
- I think the idea is that in light of Christ, those OT rituals and places have about the same efficacy as idols in the OT. The tabernacle and sacrifices and food laws and circumcision and such had an important function under the Mosaic administration, but that function has been rendered obsolete by Christ because He’s fulfilled the purpose by means of expanding the meaning. You might think of those ritualistic aspects of the Levitical priesthood as a torch that is helpful in the night, but no longer necessary in the blazing sun.
- So the connotation of the phrase made with hands is both spatial and eschatological. By spatial, I mean that the tabernacle was earthly and not heavenly. Made by hands means man made. And by eschatological, I mean that it was for the previous epoch. It was temporary not eternal. So in both senses, the OT tabernacle is therefore inferior to the true and better heavenly tabernacle.
- And this better tabernacle was purified by a better sacrifice. Now, you might ask, why heaven needed to be purified?
- Well, that’s a great question. Theologians are divided on what exactly the author is arguing here, but the two most common interpretations are that man’s sin has corrupted all of creation, including the heavens. We see something of that in Romans 8 when creation itself is subjected to futility as a result of man’s sin.
- That’s one explanation, and it may be correct, but I think its more likely mostly metaphorical and the main point is simply to establish an analogy to show how all sufficient Christ’s work is. It reaches all the way up to the heavens. It perfectly purifies, completely purifies.
- I don’t think we should necessarily draw a literal one to one correspondence between every point of the analogy. It seems to me that rather than purifying heaven, Christ’s work is better understood as fully purifying us such that we might enter and inhabit heaven.
- So Christ has entered the true tabernacle, heaven itself, appearing in the presence of God. Not a representation of His presence as with the ark of the covenant, but His actual presence.
- And remember how utterly foreign that is to the Mosaic covenant in which God’s presence was always mediated & partitioned off. The entire edifice of the tabernacle or temple symbolized God’s inaccessibility & inapproachability. God remained hidden behind the veil. So the fact that Christ has entered and drawn near certainly points to the superiority of His work. He hasn’t merely gotten us into the concert, He’s given us an all access backstage VIP pass.
- And notice the purpose, the intent. He appears in the presence of God on our behalf, as our mediator, as our intercessor.
- This corresponds to the role of the high priest in Israel who would appear on behalf of the 12 tribes. For instance,
 - *So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD. (Exodus 28:29)*
- As our high priest, Christ fulfills a similar function.
- He appears before the Father on our behalf, as our advocate as 1 John 2 says:

- *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1–2)*
- And He appears as our intercessor as Romans 8 says:
 - *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:31–34)*
- As we've said before, while there is a sense in which His work is over, there is another sense in which He is still working. His work of accomplishing redemption is complete, there is nothing left for Him to do to attain atonement, but He is still interceding and advocating.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 25-26.

Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:25–26)

- Let's count the ways in which Christ's work is superior to the Levitical or Aaronic ministry so far: first, He entered heaven itself vs. an earthly sanctuary. Second, as we'll see in these verses, He sacrifices His own blood vs. the blood of another. And third, it was offered once for all rather than repeatedly.
- The fact that the Levitical system was in a man made tabernacle & involved the blood of bulls & goats & the fact that it needed repetition all demonstrated its relative inferiority & insufficiency.
- So the author begins with the fact that He doesn't have to offer Himself repeatedly which is an idea he's already mentioned back in 7:27
 - *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:27)*
- Remember that literary style of the book. The book is linear, but also cyclical in a sense. The author will bring something up and then wait a chapter or two to come back to it and really flesh out the implications. So, if you've been coming for a few months and think, this sermon series is kinda repetitive, that's intentional because the book of Hebrews is repetitive. And the repetition is important to help us to actually understand and remember.
- Now, back in chapter 7, the contrast is with the daily sacrifices of the Levites whereas here in chapter 9, the contrast is with the annual Yom Kippur sacrifice of the Aaronic high priest.
- In both cases, they have to offer sacrifices repeatedly & that repetition symbolized inadequacy as when a coach tells his team, we're going to run this play again until you get it right.
- The fact that Christ doesn't have to repeat the sacrifice means that it was sufficient, efficient, satisfactory. He has offered a once for all sacrifice. Atonement is complete, perfected.
- That's a dominant theme in this section of Hebrews.
- So Christ's sacrifice has perpetual validity, it provides perpetual atonement, but it isn't an ongoing or perpetual sacrifice, unlike some understandings of the Roman Catholic view of communion in which Christ is continually re-presented. RCs themselves deny that they teach that Christ is repeatedly sacrificed, but its hard to deny that seems to be the implication of their view of communion in which there is a perpetual sacrifice of Christ.

- That's why, by the way, you'll almost never see a crucifix in a Protestant church. What do you see instead? An empty cross. Why? Because Christ isn't perpetually on the cross. Tetelestai, it was finished. The cross AND the grave are empty. There is no reason for Christ to be on the cross or in the grave because that work is accomplished.
- So His once for all offering has provided a basis for His entrance into heaven. And if He can enter heaven, then that means that the sacrifice was effective. Unlike the blood of bulls and goats, it actually satisfies, actually atones.
- So when does this occur? When did He enter the holy place and put away sin? Was that at His crucifixion or at His resurrection or at His ascension?
- Well, yes.
- We've talked about this before, but the entire ministry of Christ functions as a collective whole whereby we can't divide them up or parse them into distinct acts without sacrificing something.
- As an analogy, think again of a video. Think about filming a video and moving the camera back and forth between various players. And then think about if you were to edit that video and cut it to jump from one event to the next. I'm going to skip from the part where Canon scores to the part where he gets a red card or something.
- If we apply that kind of thinking to Christ's work, we might think about jumping from the moment that He accomplished salvation to the moment its applied as if each of those were represented by separate singular moments. In that case, we might ask, at what precise moment is Christ's work finished. And its tempting to say on the cross since He cries out tetelestai, it is finished.
- But the Bible also speaks about the importance of His resurrection and exaltation as part of the singular event of redemption so a better analogy would be a slow pan out. While keeping the crucifixion of Christ in center frame, the author pans out to include the resurrection and ascension and even His perfect life as they all contribute to the singular event of our redemption.
- That singular work is composed of various acts. We have His incarnation, His earthly ministry and fulfillment of the law, His death, His resurrection, and His exaltation to appear before God on our behalf. Each of those are acts contribute to the solitary work of atonement. The death of Christ is center, but the death doesn't mean anything without His perfect life and resurrection and so forth.
- So rather than limiting this to a particular moment, we should instead have a more holistic view of Christ's person and work. Rather than focusing on one act, we should consider the entire drama of the gospel in which atonement is achieved.
- And notice how that atonement is described.
- He has appeared once for all at the end of ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
- Now, by end of ages, that doesn't mean some future reality.
- This represents a unique feature of biblical eschatology. In the NT we see what is called inaugurated eschatology. By inaugurated, we mean that it has already begun. The end is now. The kingdom is both already and not yet.
- We can err on either side of that equation. We can stress the already to the neglect of the not yet. That's called an overrealized eschatology. That's what prosperity gospel health and wealth teachers do. They emphasize the present dimensions of the kingdom to the disregard of the future. After all, God has promised us healing and prosperity in Scripture so overrealized eschatology names and claims those blessings now rather than understanding that some of those promises are reserved for the resurrection.
- The opposite error is an underrealized eschatology in which all of God's work is seen as being future. Its emphasis on the not yet to the neglect of the already. Those who hold this often have a very pessimistic view of this life and the Christian experience. They have very little expectation for God to actually sanctify and transform them or their immediate circumstances. So if prosperity preachers say

that you can expect God to fulfill all of His promises now, this opposite error says you can expect nothing now. Just hold on and survive until Jesus returns.

- Neither of those is the biblical view which maintains that tension between the already and not yet. And that is a distinctive feature of the NT.
- Jewish expectation was for a hard and fast line to separate this present age and the age to come. They generally expected the Messiah to appear at the end of time and for the resurrection of the dead to symbolize the age to come which was marked by kingdom prosperity.
- That's why they couldn't understand what in the world Jesus meant by predicting His own resurrection. They had no category for a resurrection that happened in this present age. Resurrection was an end times reality from a Jewish perspective.
- But what we see in the NT is that rather than being a hard and fast line between the present age and the age to come there is actually overlap. Think of Venn Diagrams in which there's overlap between this present age and the age to come.
 - (Ryan, create a Venn Diagram in which this present age and the age to come overlap).
- In other words, the end is now. The kingdom is here. We are now in the end of ages, and have been for the past 2000 years. If someone asks if we are living in the end times, the answer is yes. But we also need to recognize that we've been living in the end times for 2 millennia.
- We encountered this in the second verse of the book.
 - *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* (Hebrews 1:2)
- Notice, we are in the last days. That word in Greek is eschatos, from which we get eschatology, the study of end times. So Christ has appeared at the end of the ages, in fact, His appearing is the decisive event that signals the beginning of the end of the ages.
- And He has done so in order to put away sin. Some translations might say to abolish sin.
- That doesn't mean that sin has been eradicated or eliminated, but that its power and penalty has been broken. We've mentioned before that there are senses in which we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.
- Painting with a broad brush, we could speak of those as justification, sanctification, and glorification. In justification, the penalty of sin is nullified. In sanctification, the power of sin is nullified. And in glorification, the presence of sin will be nullified.
- So this putting away of sin refers at least to the penalty and probably also the power of sin. Sin's ability to alienate the sinful creature from his holy Creator has been neutralized. Sin no longer has any valid claim on the elect.
 - "Christ had done away with sin as a principle and force, as a source of pollution and separation from God." (Gary Cockerill)
- And again, contrast that with RC dogma about purgatory in which most Christians are still so polluted by sin that they need centuries or millennia of purging to be fully clean. Why? Because Christ work alone and man's faith alone isn't sufficient. That's the heart of the RC error.
- If you want to sum up the problem with Catholic doctrine, it is a problem of sufficiency.
- The 66 canonical books aren't sufficient. We also need the apocrypha.
- Scripture itself isn't sufficient, we also need the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church.
- Faith alone isn't sufficient, we also need the sacraments.
- Christ intercessory work alone isn't sufficient, we also need Mary or the saints or a priest.
- Christ's once for all death isn't sufficient, we also need a perpetual mass.
- Christ's purification isn't sufficient, we also need purgatory.
- Next year we'll do a deep dive in a culture & theology on Catholicism because while RC may not be a heresy in that they get the trinity & Christology correct, nevertheless the official dogma of the church

drastically undervalues the sufficiency & efficacy of Christ's work & thus represents a serious distortion to the gospel, which was why the Reformers reacted so aggressively to it.

- Roman Catholicism may not be so different as to represent an entirely different religion, but neither is it so similar as to represent merely a different denomination.
- The whole heart of the book of Hebrews is the finality, the sufficiency, the efficacy of Christ's work and here in chapter 9, its effectuality for the purpose of purifying. So any doctrine that suggests that something like purgatory is necessary for the purgation of sin undermines this central message of the book and indeed one of the essential implications of the gospel.
- So Christ has appeared to put away sin and He has done so by the sacrifice of Himself. Now, contrast that with the Aaronic priests who offered "blood not his own."
- And the fact that Christ offered His own blood was better for a number of reasons.
 - First, it was human blood. Animals could be physically unblemished, but remember that human sin needs human blood and in order to atone, that blood must be more than unblemished, it must be blameless, innocent, perfect. It needs to be free not only of a physical blemish, but a moral blemish.
 - Second, because Christ was not only man, but also God, the blood has infinite value.
 - Third, because Christ offered Himself, it was better than the animals who had no choice.
 - Each Easter someone on the internet will post something about how penal substitution represents divine child abuse as if the Father forced the Son to suffer, but that fails to account for the fact that Christ freely offered up himself. He sacrificed Himself.
 - As He says in John 10:11.
 - *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)*
 - *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:17-18)*
- So the death of Christ isn't merely a new sacrifice, but a better sacrifice. One which actually atones, which actually purifies, which actually satisfies the demands of God's holiness and justice. Which actually accomplishes atonement and doesn't merely symbolize it.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 27-28.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 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. (Hebrews 9:27-28)

- This isn't bag on Catholics day, but trying to insert some sort of intermediate purgatorial stage between death and judgment doesn't seem to fit. There is death and there is judgment.
- But what is the author's point here in Hebrews? Well, he's establishing an analogy. The same way that human death is decisive, so is Christ's sacrifice.
- Once we die, there is no chance that we can change God's judgment. Unlike in Mormon or Jehovah's Witness teaching in which some get a second chance after death. Or in Hinduism or Buddhism in which you can reincarnate through various stages until you finally attain nirvana.
- The Christian view is that death is the decisive moment in which your eternal state is locked into place.
- Likewise, Christ's death has dealt a decisive judgment when it comes to sin. So, once Christ returns, there is no dealing with sin left to do. All of His sin dealing is done in His first advent, His first coming.
- He was offered once to bear the sins of many. That phrase bear the sins of many is most likely alluding to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:12 which says:

- *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.* (Isaiah 53:12)
- We see that same idea of bearing our sins in 1 Peter 2
 - *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* (1 Peter 2:24)
- This is at the heart of the atonement. Christ bearing our sins and the penalty of our sins.
- He puts away our sin, but He does so in a way that satisfies divine justice. He doesn't just capriciously disregard it, like Allah in Islam. We read in Romans 3 last week that the death of Christ demonstrates how a just God can justify unjust people. He doesn't just expiate, He propitiates.
- How can a holy and just God forgive us?
- The answer is that Christ died for us & in our place. We call this penal substitutionary atonement.
- Penal in that Christ bears the penalty of our sin.
- Substitutionary in that He does so in our place, on our behalf, as our substitute.
- And atonement in that it effectively redeems us and reconciles us to God.
- So in context the author is simply trying to show the singular significance of Christ's sacrifice. It is so efficient that there is nothing left to do in that regard when He returns.
- He will return, we believe in a second advent. So He will return, but the reason that He returns is crucial. He doesn't return to offer another sacrifice or die again.
 - "Christ at his second coming will make it known how truly and really he had taken away sins, so that there would be no need of any other sacrifice to pacify God; as though he had said, 'When we come to the tribunal of Christ, we shall find that there was nothing wanting in his death.'" (John Calvin)
- In other words, the death of Christ was so perfect that it fully guarantees the judgment that we will face. There is nothing left to be done, no chance of justification falling short or being inadequate. Christ will return, but not to make another sacrifice or achieve some more righteousness.
- To throw another religious critique in here, contrast this with Islam. According to Islamic theology, Jesus is a prophet who didn't really die on the cross, but was assumed into heaven and will return at the end of the ages to defeat the anti-Christic figure and then to himself die since He didn't die the first go around. So the Christ of the Koran returns only to die.
- But in Christian theology, Christ's death has already occurred. Once for all, never to die again.
- As we read in Romans 6:9
 - *We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* (Romans 6:9)
- So when He returns, it isn't to make another sacrifice or to offer more blood. That is finished. Tetelestai.
- Rather, His return is to save those whom He has already purified and justified.
- Who is that? Those who eagerly wait for Him.
- Now, think of the rhetorical effect this would have for the first century audience receiving and reading this letter.
- In the midst of suffering and persecution, the call to wait is difficult. So that's why it is accompanied by the promise of salvation. You aren't waiting in a state of wishful thinking, you are waiting in hope...and hope in the Bible is assured, certain, guaranteed.
- So this call to wait functions as a call to perseverance, a call to endurance, a call to withstand suffering by eagerly waiting for divine help.

- That help is promised. That help is certain. Yes, there is no promise that He will help in the way and at the time that you want, but the help itself is assured. Salvation and vindication are coming so don't drift. Don't give up. Don't give in to the temptation.
- We will all appear before the judgment seat of God, but the elect, those who persevere by grace through faith, have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about. They have been justified and purified.
- Remember we've mentioned a number of times before that in the OT, God's throne is described in terms of judgment. When Isaiah sees God on His throne, his response is to cry out woe is me.
- But in Hebrews, we see the throne described as a throne of mercy. And we are beckoned to come, to draw near. Why? Because Christ has paved the way, He has gone before us, beyond the veil, He has done all that is necessary for us and our salvation.
- And one day He will return and all that is sad will become untrue. As we read in Revelation 21
 - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* (Revelation 21:1-4)
- So maranatha. Come Lord Jesus. Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- One of the things we like to talk about here at Reformation is the multi-dimensional nature of God's work.
- We don't want to settle for a minimalistic theology or a lowest common denominator of doctrine. We want to embrace how robust and rich and multi-faceted God's work is.
- So we've talked about that as it relates to communion.
- We've talked about communion is subjective and objective. It is about what God has objectively accomplished, but there is also a subjective element as Paul tells us to examine ourselves before partaking.
- And it is both upward and outward, vertical and horizontal. It is upward as it symbolizes our communion with God and outward as it symbolizes our communion with each other as represented by the imagery of one loaf and one cup.
- But another dimension that we've mentioned is that communion is both historical and eschatological. By historical, I mean that it looks backward to the death of Christ. But by eschatological I mean that it also looks forward to His return and the consummation of all things.
- For instance, we read this in Matthew 26 and the institution of the supper:
 - *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* (Matthew 26:27-29)
- Notice the eschatological language there. The meal orients us not only back in time, but forward in time, serving a prophetic role.
- So as we partake this morning, I want to do so with this future orientation in mind. To think of the meal as an appetizer for that future meal, we call the wedding supper of the Lamb. A guarantee that Christ will return and make all things new and thus an assurance that we can endure.

- So take a second to contemplate that and allow that to encourage you as nourishment against fear and shame and despair and we'll partake together shortly.
- On the night...