

Christ's Once and for All Sacrifice

Text: Hebrews 9:6-28; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 30

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Let us turn to Lord's Day 30 in the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Our focus is on the first and longest of its questions and answers, Question 80: "What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the popish mass?" The answer begins, "The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshipped by us." This is the truth of the gospel as rediscovered and proclaimed in the 16th century Reformation, summarised in the "five solas": salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone, according to Scripture alone.

Answer 80 then draws a sharp contrast with the mass: "But the Mass teaches, that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshipped in them; so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry."

Christ's sacrifice is once and for all. This is the basis of the true gospel. Hebrews 9 teaches us the superiority of Christ's priesthood and the finality of His work. It is a once-for-all sacrifice that redeems both Old and New Testament saints. Verse 15 explains, "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament... that... they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Salvation is in Christ's once-for-all death. Let us therefore consider Christ's once and for all sacrifice: the meaning of it, the perversion of it, and the comfort of it.

The Meaning of It

There are at least five verses in Hebrews that explicitly state Christ's sacrifice is "once and for all." In Greek, a single word conveys what in English takes several: "once and for all." Hebrews 7:27 says Christ "needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice... for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself." Hebrews 9:12 says, "... by his own blood he entered in *once* into

the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Hebrews 9:26 teaches, “... but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 9:28 states, “So Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.” Hebrews 10:10 confirms, “... we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*”

Hebrews doesn't just state this but argues it. Hebrews 7:27 contrasts Christ's sacrifice with the *daily* offerings of the Levitical priests. Christ doesn't need to offer *daily* sacrifices. His *one* offering is sufficient. Hebrews 10:10-12 contrasts again: “... every priest standeth daily... offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down ...” The priests stand, still working. Christ sits – His work is done.

Further, Hebrews contrasts Christ's death with the annual Day of Atonement. Hebrews 9:7 tells us the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once every year, not without blood. But Hebrews 9:12 says Christ entered in *once* – once and for all – by His own blood. Verses 25 and 26 explain: “Nor yet that he should offer himself often... for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” Instead, Christ died “*once* in the end of the ages” to put away sin.

Then comes the analogy with death. Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed unto men once to die,” and then verse 28 adds, “So Christ was once offered...” Everyone dies once, and Christ died once – for sin. If someone claims Christ must die often, they might as well say a person dies thousands of times.

These five texts – Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 9:26, 9:28, and 10:10 – are clear. But Hebrews gives three more parallels to underscore this point. First, the once-for-all nature of human death. Second, the once-for-all nature of Christ's entry into heaven. Hebrews 9:12 again: “... by his own blood he entered in *once* into the holy place.” Christ cannot enter heaven multiple times, any more than He can die multiple times. Third, Hebrews 12:26-27 speaks of the shaking of creation: “Yet *once* more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” This one final shaking corresponds to the one final atonement of Christ.

Another important once-for-all is in Jude 3: “Earnestly contend for the faith which was *once* delivered unto the saints.” The revelation of the New Testament, the right interpretation and fulfilment of the Old, was delivered once and for all. No one can add to it. Not Montanus, not Muhammad, not Joseph Smith, not Pentecostalism. Just as Christ's death is once and final, so too is the Word.

The Perversion of It

Here we consider the analogy of baptism. Water baptism is to be administered once, not repeated. Ephesians 4:5 says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Baptism is to be administered only once per person. The *Belgic Confession*, Article 34, states: “We detest the error of the Anabaptists who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received.” To repeat baptism is to commit the sin of Anabaptism.

Now, if repeating baptism is a sin, what about repeating Christ’s sacrifice? That is the Roman mass. Answer 80 of the catechism explains: “The mass teaches, that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests.” The Reformation rightly declared the mass a denial of Christ’s once-for-all offering and an accursed idolatry.

Repetition in baptism—though serious—is rare. But the mass is performed daily, weekly, even multiple times per day across the world. Hebrews 9:25–26 speaks to this: “Nor yet that he should offer himself often... for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” But the mass implies Christ has been offered again and again—thousands, millions of times—since the beginning. Hebrews denies this. “Now *once* in the end of the ages hath he appeared.”

Verse 27 reminds us: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” No purgatory. No sacrifice for the dead. The Roman mass, however, is offered not just for the living but also for the dead. This doctrine rests on the heresy of purgatory—a fictional third place invented for profit. The guilt-ridden are told to pay for the release of their loved ones. But Hebrews says there is one death, and then the judgment. No repeated sacrifice. No purgatory. No forgiveness after death.

Moreover, the mass teaches that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine and must be worshipped in them. This is transubstantiation. Answer 80 says: “Christ... is now not on earth, but in heaven, at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshipped by us.” Worshipping a wafer is idolatry. The mass teaches not only a repeated sacrifice but also a false object of worship. It gets worse. The Roman system teaches that Christ’s sacrifice is joined with the sufferings of Mary, the saints, the congregation, the clergy, and the whole Roman Catholic Church through all ages. Supposedly, their works and sufferings are part of the atonement. This is utter corruption. Then the value of the mass is multiplied by relics—bones or items beneath the altar. Some churches, having better relics, supposedly offer more powerful masses.

This is not a caricature. It is Roman doctrine. The Reformed creeds are not overstating the case. The mass is a denial of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, a perversion of the gospel, and an accursed idolatry.

The Comfort of It

But what a contrast to the simple and saving truth of Christ's finished work. The mass says: Christ's suffering, plus your works, plus the church's merits, plus relics, plus purgatory. But Hebrews says: "*once and for all.*" Nothing more is needed. No suffering or working to earn salvation. Christ has done it all.

Against the temporary priesthood of the Old Testament and the false priesthood of Rome stands Christ's eternal priesthood and one sacrifice for sin. One man. One offering. One cross. "It is finished!" – that's what He said in English. In Greek, one word: *tetelestai*. And it stands finished – perfect tense. The same truth expressed in Hebrews with the word "once and for all."

The believer hears all this and rejoices. Even if you couldn't follow all the argument, this much is clear: my salvation is not in me, but in Him. Not in my death, but in His. Not in my sufferings, but in His. It's all done – finished – 2,000 years ago. It's recorded infallibly in the Bible, and it's safe and secure. However bad the week, however troubled the soul, you are safe in Him.

I Peter 3:18 says, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Romans 5:9 says we are "justified by his blood." Hebrews 10:10 again: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Our justification, our sanctification, our reconciliation – all in His once-for-all death.

Romans 6:10 adds: "In that he died, he died unto sin once... but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." His death to sin is our death to sin. His life is our new life in Him. The believer is renewed, sanctified, and alive to God through Christ.

It's all once and for all. And the believer is comforted and sure.

Our Father in heaven, help us to understand the wonder of the cross, the depths of the book of Hebrews, and to see the truth over against the lie, for us and our children. Preserve us through the love of the truth, for we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.