

Christ's "Once For All" Work

Introduction. Every Christian benefits from a more complete understanding of God's word. This understanding can be gained, in one aspect, by exploring the original language of the Bible. Many insights are not apparent to us in the English language.

The Greek word *ephapax* means "once for all." Vine's Dictionary gives the definition as "perpetual validity or not requiring repetition." This word is used three times in the book of Hebrews to describe the work of Jesus (cp. Romans 6:10; 1 Corinthians 15:6). Christ's sacrifice, redemption, and sanctification are all used with the word *ephapax*. Amazing insight of His work and our responsibilities can be gained by studying the emphasis placed on these three separate acts of Christ.

I. Christ's Sacrifice Was Once For All (Hebrews 7:23-28)

- A. The ritual through which the Hebrew people offered the blood or the flesh of an animal to God as a sacrifice for their sins began back in Eden.
 - 1. Down through the ages, God has required blood to cover the sins of mankind so they could be hid from His face (Isaiah 38:17; Hebrews 9:22).
 - 2. However, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin because they were amoral creatures incapable of sin (Hebrews 10:4). But man is a free moral agent and the only sacrifice which could truly satisfy God was the sacrifice of His Son (Isaiah 53:10; Romans 3:26).
- B. Jesus did not have to offer sacrifices daily like the Levitical priests and He did not have to offer sacrifices for Himself.
 - 1. The Mosaic Law stipulated that the high priest must first offer a bull for his own sins and for the sins of his family
 - 2. He then was to offer a goat as a sin offering for the people (Leviticus 16:6-22). This was done annually on the Day of Atonement.
- C. The writer of Hebrews wanted to draw a sharp contrast between the daily sacrifices under the Jewish Law and the one-time sacrifice of the perfect high priest (Exodus 29:38-44). This sacrifice was a perfect offering and eternally satisfactory (John 15:13; Galatians 1:3-4; Ephesians 5:1-2). In response to this sacrifice, God requires His followers to sacrifice themselves (John 12:25; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 5:24).

II. Christ's Redemption Was Once For All (Hebrews 9:11-14)

- A. Redemption means "to buy out or purchase, especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom."
 - 1. In the Old Testament, redemption refers to redemption by a kinsman (Leviticus 25:24, 51-52), rescue or deliverance (Numbers 3:49), and ransom (Psalm 111:9; 130:7).
 - a) Redemption could be applied to property, animals, persons, and the national of Israel as a whole.
 - b) In nearly every instance, freedom from obligation, bondage, or danger was secured by the payment of a price, ransom, or satisfaction to obtain freedom, favor, or reconciliation.

2. In the New Testament, redemption refers to salvation from sin, death, and the wrath of God by Christ's sacrifice. Jesus came to redeem us from the curse of the Law (Mark 10:45; Romans 3:19-20, 24; Galatians 3:13). The curse of the Law was that one had to keep it perfectly. How can we fail to rejoice having been freed from the oppressive bondage of sin, the Law, and fear of death (John 8:36)?
- B. The New Testament also emphasizes the great cost of redemption, which was the precious blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7). Because of this cost, Christians are exhorted to remember their redemption as a motivation to holiness (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:13-19).

III. Christ's Sanctification Was Once For All (Hebrews 10:8-13)

- A. Sanctification is the relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ (Acts 26:16-18; 1 Peter 1:2).
1. Holiness belongs to God alone (Isaiah 1:4; 30:11-13; 43:15). Isaiah uses "Holy One of Israel" 25 times in his book to emphasize the holiness of God. "Sanctify" and "holy" come from the same root word. Sanctification therefore is the action of setting aside something or some one as peculiarly belonging to God. Several items were spoken of as set apart to God in the Old Testament:
 - a) The city of Jerusalem.
 - b) The tabernacle.
 - c) The Sabbath.
 - d) The priests.
 - e) The prophets.
 2. It is the state or condition essential for access into God's presence, for only those who are sanctified can draw near to God (Hebrews 2:10-11).
 3. Sanctification of people is first found under the Mosaic Law where God required all of the firstborn to be sanctified for Him (Exodus 13:12). God also required an unclean person be cleansed or sanctified by ritualistic means before he could approach Him in worship.
- B. Old Testament sacrifices did not take away sin, but they were able to sanctify "for the purifying of the flesh" (Hebrews 9:13). The blood of the New Covenant (Hebrews 10:29), however, goes far beyond the ritual purification of the body. The offering of Christ's body and blood serves to purge our conscience from "dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).
- C. Although Christ's sacrifice was perfect and has given to us the wonderful opportunity to be sanctified before God, we also have a responsibility in the process of sanctification (Romans 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

Conclusion. The writer of Hebrews told the young Christians of the superiority of Christ over the Levitical system. Because of the perfection of Christ, He needed only to do His work once for all. The Levitical system needed imperfect repetition, but Christ came and nothing else will ever be needed for man to find his way to the eternal home of glory (Isaiah 53:4-6; Hebrews 4:14-16). Because of this tremendous work, sacrifice yourself and be willing to live in a redeemed and holy way.