The Last Judgment Hebrews 9:24-28
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"Christ Will Appear a Second Time"
I. He came the first time to sacrifice for our sins.
II. He will come again to bring us salvation.

Dear Christian friends,

"Look! The day is coming," Malachi thundered in the OT reading, ***"burning like a blast furnace."*** That day – the LAST Day – JUDGMENT Day – the END of the world - is going to be QUITE the day. ***"At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."*** Jesus ***"will send His angels to gather His elect from one end of the heavens to the other."*** Jesus will separate all people into JUST TWO groups – those one His left and those on His right – into believers and unbelievers. Jesus will pronounce judgment with JUST TWO POSSIBLE **sentences** – ***"Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into eternal fire"*** OR ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."*** There will be NO APPEALING God's decision or DELAYING the sentence.

Today we are reminded AND REASSURED, ***"Christ will appear a second time."*** The writer then explains that 1)Christ came the **first time** to SACRIFICE for our sins and 2)He will come again to BRING us **salvation**.

I. He came the first time to sacrifice for our sins.

This letter was written to **Jewish Christians** who were being persecuted for their faith and were tempted to TURN BACK to their **old Jewish ways**. This **letter** is a call to STAND FIRM in the **faith** – to HOLD TIGHT to **Jesus** - because ***"Christ will appear a second time."***

To encourage these Christians the writer reminds them of HOW THEY WORSHIPPED before becoming Christians. You know that **OT worship** was very strictly regulated by God. Just page through the book of **Leviticus** sometime. There were ALL KINDS of **rules** but they finally came down to **three things** – the TEMPLE – the PRIEST – the SACRIFICE.

God allowed the Jews to sacrifice **only** in PLACES APPROVED by God. That finally came to mean the **tabernacle** or later on the temple in Jerusalem. The **tabernacle** was built according to VERY EXACT SPECIFICATIONS **given by God** Himself. That's because as we're told here, ***"the handmade sanctuary (was) a representation of the true sanctuary"*** in heaven.

The people weren't allowed **to offer** their own sacrifices. They NEEDED A PRIEST to do that for them. But not everybody could be a priest. Only direct descendants of **Moses' brother Aaron** could be priests. The people couldn't bring JUST ANY OLD animal for a sacrifice – the cheapest one they could find. They had to bring PERFECT animals.

All that was **meant to be** a PICTURE-PROMISE of Jesus. That OT worship centering around the **temple** – the **priest** – the **sacrifice** – was meant to HOLD BEFORE the people's eyes God's promise of the Savior and what the Savior would **all do** for them. They served the same purpose as that **big cross** and the stained-glass windows in our church do.

The TEMPLE pictured heaven – GOD'S DWELLING place. But who are we to **come into** God's presence? The people weren't allowed into the ***"Holy Place"*** of the temple. Only the high priest was allowed into the ***"Most Holy Place"*** – and that only once a year on the **Day of Atonement** and only if he brought blood with him. God was teaching His people the SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES of ignoring and **defying** Him. Sin separates us from God – it BLOCKS OUR WAY to heaven.

Both the priest and the sacrifice PICTURED Jesus. The priest was the MEDIATOR between **guilty sinners** and their **holy Creator**. The lambs died – NOT BECAUSE **they had done** anything wrong but IN THE PLACED of the **guilty people**. Right before this we read, ***"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** But the blood of animals COULDN'T ***"take away the sin of the world."*** That's why the priests repeated those sacrifices **day** after day, **year** after year.

That was OT WORSHIP. What do we have in NT worship? **We have** God's promises fulfilled! OUR PRIEST is the eternal Son of God born one of us. Jesus is ***"the Lamb without blemish or defect"*** – in other words Jesus had lived a life PERFECT **in every way**. Jesus perfectly obeyed every commandment for us. Then came Good Friday and the **cross**. The innocent Lord Jesus died IN OUR PLACE to pay for **all** our sins. ***"(Jesus) did not enter a handmade sanctuary, He entered into heaven itself, now to appear before God on our behalf. He did not enter to offer Himself many times, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own. (Jesus) has appeared once and for all, at the climax of the ages, in order to take away sin by the SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."***

Those facts are THE HEART of our faith and worship. WITH **Word** and **Sacraments** – with **hymns** and **liturgy** – our focus is ALL ON JESUS and what He's done for us. That's what makes **weekly worship** and **daily devotions** so important. ONE DAY this world will end. The **Last Day** will come. TIME for the devil is **growing short** AND HE KNOWS it! The devil will try **whatever it takes** to get our eyes off Jesus. The devil **will try to get** us so wrapped up in this life that WE FORGET that ***"Christ will appear a second time."***

We need regular worship to KEEP US FOCUSED on Jesus. **Trusting** in Jesus we are forgiven – we have peace with God – we have eternal life in heaven. Jesus has REPEATEDLY promised that He ***"will appear a second time…"***

II. He will come to bring us salvation.

The writer calls this time of the NT ***"the climax of the ages."*** The Greek word pictures everything COMING TOGETHER and reaching its **goal**. We're reminded that GOD IS IN CONTROL of **history**. God has His plans for this world. We can see them AT CREATION – a perfect world – **perfect** people living **perfect lives** – enjoying a **perfect relationship** with their Creator AND each other. That **perfect** world was lost when Adam and Eve defied God and ate the forbidden fruit. But WE HAVE Jesus – who came once to pay for our sins and who will come again to ***"take us to be with Him forever."***

It might be a while until that happens. Peter explains, ***"the Lord is not slowing in keeping His promise. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*** HOW MUCH TIME this world still has – **how much time** EACH PERSON still has – we just don't know. We're reminded here, ***"it is appointed for people to die only once and after this comes the judgment."*** Today could be JUDGMENT Day. Or the **world** could keep going for **thousands of more** years. **Anyone** of us could die TODAY – or we might live **several more** years or decades. We just don't know!

God's Word tells us that WHEN a person dies the soul leaves the body. The body is buried or **whatever**. The soul IS JUDGED at the moment of death. The person who dies TRUSTING in Jesus as his Savior – that person's soul goes immediately to **be with Jesus** in heaven's eternal glory. The soul of the unbeliever goes immediately to be **with the devil** in hell's **unending punishment**. There is NO OTHER PLACE – no SECOND CHANCE.

As Christians we deal with death with our FAITH FIXED on Jesus. We have Jesus' EASTER VICTORY over death and the grave. We have His promises – ONE of **eternal life** in heaven when we die – AND TWO that ***"He will appear a second time — without sin — to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him."***

Jesus will come this time ***"without sin." "It is finished!"*** Jesus cried from the cross and He MEANT it. Jesus' one sacrifice of Himself on Calvary's cross that first Good Friday WAS ENOUGH to pay for all sins of **all people** of **all time**. WHEN Jesus ***"appears a second time"*** He will ***"bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him."***

The Last Day **will be** JUDGMENT Day – but that's OK! Because Jesus came the **first** time to ***"take away (our) sin"*** we now look forward to Judgment Day. We will stand before God washed clean in Jesus' blood and clothed with Jesus' righteousness – His perfect life. Clinging to Jesus we will hear that PRICELESS invitation, ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."***

Come Judgment Day we will fully enjoy the ***"salvation"*** JESUS WON for us. How can we FULLY COMPREHEND that now? No more sin or **guilt** – no more temptations – **pains** – **problems**. No more sickness or **suffering**. No more devil or wicked world or **sinful nature** to contend with. ***"No more death or mourning or crying or pain."*** In Revelation God calls it a ***"new heaven and new earth – for the old order of things will have passed away."*** God promises us, ***"Behold, I am making everything new!"*** As we'll hear next Sunday we will be SAINTS TRIUMPHANT – living forever with our Savior God basking in His **glory** and **grace**.

"Christ will appear a second time …to bring salvation to those who are EAGERLY WAITING for Him." Today reminds us that EACH ONE of us needs to ALWAYS BE READY to **meet God**. **Each one** of us needs to TAKE TO HEART this letter's repeated calls to STAND FIRM in our Christian faith. ***"We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away,"*** we're told. In the next chapter we read, ***"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the DAY APPROACHING."***

Jesus will bring salvation to ALL who IN FAITH ***"are eagerly waiting"*** for Him. But those who don't believe in Him – those who have fallen away from Jesus – those who don't have time for Jesus or who don't want to BE BOTHERED by Jesus – they will hear that DEVASTATING sentence, ***"Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."***

"Christ will appear a second time …to bring salvation to those who are EAGERLY WAITING for Him." The Bible closes with Jesus promising us, ***"Yes, I am coming soon."*** And so the Church continues to pray, ***"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"*** Amen.

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