

TEXT: Hebrews 9:24-28

THEME: HE'S WAITING FOR YOU THERE

1. That Will Be My Judgment Day
2. That Was My Judgment Day

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb:

It was a stinky place! The pages of Scripture simply cannot convey what it smelled like on a hot summer's day. There were animals—and their excrement—all around. Some were alive, and many were dead. The flesh of many animals was already burning on the altar in the middle of the courtyard. Men in white, whose robes had been turned red from all the blood that spurted on them, were carrying out the hard work of killing and cutting. They struggled with the animals—sheep, birds, sometimes oxen—to get them to the right place for slaughter and skinning. When the bleating and lowing stopped, the animals had to be cut apart and offered to God.

Indeed, you would think that the place was a slaughterhouse except for the elaborate rituals going on. One man, dressed like no one else, was helping the priests in their work, explaining the rituals to the people who had brought the sacrifices, and helping the younger priests perform the rituals properly.

This man, the high priest, had special duties. Once a year he entered the Most Holy Place—a picture of heaven—with the blood of a goat. He sprinkled that blood on the ark of the covenant. What he had been doing all year for the people in helping them with their sacrifices, he was now doing for himself. He had shed the blood of a special animal, and he was using that to purify himself of his sins.

If you had asked him what this meant for him, he would have answered, “This is my judgment day. This is the day when something else is judged and killed in my place.” And if you had asked the priests what that day signified to them, they would have said, “Yes, this is our judgment day also.”

And all those who truly understood God's plan of salvation would say, “These sacrifices can never really take away our sins. If they did, we wouldn't have to keep offering them day after day. Someday God will send us a greater lamb. His sacrifice, once and for all, will do away with all this stench and noise. Indeed, **THAT WILL BE OUR TRUE JUDGMENT DAY!**”

The Old Testament believers looked at the sacrifices in their present and looked ahead to the one great sacrifice for sin. We New Testament Christians

also look in two directions. First, we look ahead to eternal life in heaven. Saint Paul said, **“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23)**. Second, we continually look back to the cross of Christ. With eyes looking in those two directions, we are secure in our salvation and prepared to serve the Lord and our neighbors in this life.

When we look ahead to eternal life, though, we see a major hurdle standing in our way, namely, judgment day. At least, that is the way it appears to many people. Non-Christians make jokes about it: “So and so is standing before the pearly gates and Saint Peter comes up to him and asks...” Others brush off the idea of judgment by appealing to God’s love and believing that God would never be caught judging and condemning anyone to everlasting perfect punishment in hell.

Even some Christians are nervous about judgment day. Consider the first stanza of that hymn about judgment day we just sang:

*Great God, what do I see and hear? The end of things created;
The judge of mankind shall appear On clouds of glory seated.
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before;
Prepare, my soul, to meet him! (CW 208:1)*

If that’s all we Christians would remember about that hymn, it’s no wonder we would get nervous at talk of judgment day!

But whenever we Christians talk about judgment day, we should always look backward. We are going to die and after that face judgment. There is a note of finality about that. But the writer of Hebrews speaks about something else that happened in the past with an equal amount of finality. **“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.”** On the cross, Jesus was judged by his Father as being guilty of having committed your sins and mine. He was condemned to suffer for them. And he did.

The point is this: your true judgment day will not take place in the future. It already took place 2,000 years ago. Jesus’ day of judgment was your day of judgment. When Jesus gave himself on the cross, you were hanging there with him. In his person, you were judged, you died, and you rose with him eternally free from sin. You can say, “That was my true judgment day. The next one will be a piece of cake!” Amen.