

Communion on the Finality of Christ's Sacrifice Hebrews 9:23-28

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-23-2011

I want us to look at a pivotal passage for the Reformation – Hebrews 9:23-28. This passage not only contradicts the Roman view of the mass, but it gives us comfort in the Gospel. Rome taught and continues to teach that Christ has to be sacrificed over and over again in every mass. They teach that when the priest raises the elements, they actually turn into Christ's human flesh and blood. And they claim that so real is the change into flesh and blood that it is appropriate to give the highest form of worship to the elements. For example, the Code of Canon Law, in Canon 898, says, "hold the Eucharist in highest honor... worshipping it with supreme adoration." The second Vatican Council said that we are to worship the elements with "the same worship of latria or adoration that we offer to God." (148)

They also teach that it was not enough for Christ to die in 30 AD. They said that He needs to be re-sacrificed in every mass because people continue to sin. Well, what does that say about Christ's past death? It implies that it is not sufficient. Pope John Paul II said, "The Eucharist is above all else a sacrifice" (174). The Second Vatican Council said, [the Mass] perpetuate[s] the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again." (178). "For in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated..." (183). Pope Pius XII said, "The august sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby the High Priest by an unbloody immolation offers Himself a most acceptable victim to the Eternal Father, as He did upon the cross." (188) So real do they say this sacrifice is, that it washes away our sins and takes away God's anger. The Roman Catechism says, "[the Eucharist was given] that the Church might have a perpetual Sacrifice, by which our sins might be expiated, and our heavenly Father... might be turned away from wrath to mercy..." (193) The Council of Trent said, "the holy council teaches that this is a truly propitiatory sacrifice... the Lord is appeased by this offering, he gives the gracious gift of repentance, he absolves even enormous offenses and sins." (194) They said that it provided satisfaction for the sins not only of the living, but of the dead.

But all of that false theology robs the cross of its power and it robs God's people of their assurance since there will always be more new sins that need new atonement. And I think this passage from Hebrews provides a wonderful correction to each of these errors. Let's start at verse 23.

Hebrews 9:23 "Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

Notice the contrast between copies and heaven. The earthly sacrifices were not the real thing. They simply pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is said to be in heaven in this verse. His humanity is not down here below, but is in heaven. Notice verse 24:

Hebrews 9:24 "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands..." [His humanity could not be omnipresent like His deity is, or He would cease to be man. As to His humanity He does not enter holy places on earth. So it says, "For Christ has not entered holy places made with hands"], "...which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;"

Where does Christ's body appear? In heaven, not on earth. It does not appear in the sacrament. It appears in heaven. But in verse 25 the writer hastens to add that Jesus is not perpetually being sacrificed even in heaven.

Hebrews 9:25 “not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another —“

This is in such stark contrast to what Rome taught. Unlike the Old Testament priests, Jesus does not offer Himself often. Rome teaches that He does. Verse 26

Hebrews 9:26 “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Notice several things here. First, if Jesus had to be offered often as Rome says, then He wouldn't have been crucified in 30 AD. He would have been crucified at the beginning of history. Second, it says explicitly that He was only offered once. Third, at that time He took care of our sins forever - past, present and future. Marvelous grace of Jesus! There is nothing more that needs to be done. As Jesus said on the cross: "It is finished." Verses 27-28

Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” As to His humanity there are not multiple appearances, but He will appear a second time at the end of time. He was offered only once.

All of this speaks of the finality of Christ's sacrifice. Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow.