

- Theme: Jesus Appears Twice for Us  
 I. He came once to make atonement  
 II. He will come again to bring salvation

Introduction: I want to begin by talking about two false notions: Reincarnation and Millennialism. Reincarnation is one of the primary beliefs of Buddhism, in fact, reincarnation is central to their religion. Reincarnation is the false notion that human beings are born into the world again and again as other people or even animals. With each successive lifetime, that soul has the chance to work himself or herself closer to Nirvana, ultimate bliss. Our text today will tell us that reincarnation doesn't happen. Buddhists are wrong.

There is another false notion that is popular among many Christian churches. Some people misinterpret Revelation 20. They claim that Jesus will return to earth at least two more times, and that all people will have a second, and possibly even a third chance to trust in the Lord. This mistaken notion is called millennialism, and our text will tell us that millennialists are wrong also.

Jesus Appears Twice for Us, and only twice. The first time was almost 2000 years ago when Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem. The second time hasn't happened yet because we're all still here. Jesus Appears Twice for Us. The first time He came to make atonement for our sins on the cross. The second time He will come to bring salvation to all who are waiting for his return. Yes, the Buddhists, the reincarnationists, and the millennialists are wrong. But don't take my word for it. Let's turn our attention to God's Words which we have before us today.

I. He came once to make atonement

"But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." Jesus appeared on the earth once so far, a long time ago. Our passage tells us why he appeared, "to do away with sin." And our passage tells us how he did away with sin, "by the sacrifice of himself."

This book was originally a letter addressed to the "Hebrews," that is to Jewish Christians in Israel. The Jews knew what sacrifices were, but maybe we don't. Walk along with me in the eyes of a Jewish boy or girl on a trip to the temple in Jerusalem. Your father has traveled with you a long ways to Jerusalem. He has brought along the best lamb from his entire flock. You enter the temple grounds through a huge gate, there are people all around you. Some people haven't brought an animal for the sacrifice, but that's O.K. because they can purchase one here in the temple courtyard. There are lambs and goats and bull calves for sale. It sort of smells like a barn or a petting zoo, yuk! But wait, it gets worse.

There is a big brass altar located right in front of the temple doors. On top of this huge, square pedestal there is a fire burning with thick black smoke coming up from it. You get a whiff of the smoke; it smells like dad dropped a hamburger

through the grill and onto the charcoal, only worse. Then your father hands over his prize winning lamb to another man. He leads the lamb over to the large brass altar, whips out a knife, cuts its throat and drains out the blood. Then he cuts up the lamb and throws the pieces into the fire, hide, meat, bones, and all.

Pretty graphic, huh? That certainly wasn't a boring way to worship God. Those sacrifices were designed to do several things. First, they made a big impression on anyone who witnessed one. Second, they reminded people of the seriousness of their sins. And third, those sacrifices reminded the people that God demands life blood as the payment for sins.

Any Jewish boy or girl, man or woman knew what a sacrifice was. When the writer to the Hebrews talks to them about what Jesus did and the sacrifice he made, they understood very well the significance of what our Lord has done.

On one special day of the year, the Day of Atonement, a special set of sacrifices were performed. A bull and two goats were chosen. The bull was killed along with one goat. The blood of each was collected in two separate bowls. The high priest took the bull and offered it as a sin offering for himself and his family. Then he took the bowl of blood and went into the inner most room of the temple the holy of holies, where the ark of the covenant was kept. The high priest offered incense and sprinkled the blood on the top of the ark of the covenant, and in front of it seven times. Then he repeated the process with one of the goats. The other goat was brought to the high priest. He confessed the sins of the whole nation over its head. Then this goat was lead out into the desert and released to wander away. This goat was called the scape goat because he carried the blame of the people on his head. Every year the high priest would repeat this elaborate ceremony.

Application: Now that you know all about sacrifices and the Day of Atonement, the rest of this text will make sense to you. Listen to our text, "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence." The temple was only a made-made dwelling place for God, but Jesus ascended into heaven itself where God lives to plead our case before him.

"Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." When Jesus ascended into heaven, it was not to offer himself as another sacrifice. Jesus work was done when he died on the cross. Remember Jesus' last words from the cross? It Is Finished! The work of paying for our sins was finished; Jesus' sacrifice was finished for good.

The good news we have to share with the world is that Jesus paid for our sins already. When he came to earth the first time, he made complete atonement for our sins. This wasn't like the high priest who did the sacrifices year after year with the blood of a bull or goat. Jesus paid for our sins with his own blood,

and he only had to do it once for all!

Then our text clearly proves reincarnationists wrong in their thinking, "Just as man is destined TO DIE ONCE, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people." Our life is so important because it's the only time we have to hear about Jesus and what he's done for us. We all get only one go-round at this world. We're not reincarnated again and again for second, third, fourth, fifth, and on and on, chances to trust God and his Word. One lifetime and after that we face judgment.

Transition: The millennialists are also wrong. Jesus came once to make atonement, he will come again to bring salvation.

II. He will come again to bring salvation.

Our text says this quite specifically, "He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Jesus will come back to earth once more. He won't come to suffer and die again; he did that already. This time when Jesus comes, he comes to bring salvation to all those who are waiting for him. Jesus will come to deliver on all the promises which he's made to you and me. He promised to take us to heaven to live with him, and that's where we'll be.

Application: Jesus came once to make atonement, he will come again "to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." You and I are waiting for him right now. Hearing God's Word makes us ready for Jesus' return. Trusting in our Savior makes us ready for the Last Judgment. We don't have to be afraid of Judgment Day because Jesus has washed our sins away already when he came the first time. We know about that sacrifice Jesus made. And we trust God to remove all our sins so that we are fit for heaven.

For us, the Last Judgment is the day when Jesus will bring salvation to all of us. We look forward to that day and time when Jesus will make good on all his promises. We wait for that day eagerly when we will be reunited with all those who have died before us with faith in Christ. "He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

Conclusion: Jesus hasn't returned yet. Scripture guarantees that you won't miss that day. There is still time left for you to hear God's Word. There is still time left to tell what you know about your Savior to the guy you work with, or to the lady who watches your kids while you're at work, or to the family that lives next door. There is still time left for some of you to share your faith with your husband or your wife or your kids, if you haven't already. This we know for certain: "He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." "He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Jesus Appears Twice for Us. Once to take our sins away, twice to take us to heaven. May we look forward to that day when Jesus keeps his final promise to us. Amen.