

Once For All

Lenten Devotions 2025

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Note: Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

Fourth Week of Lent — Monday, March 31

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. (Hebrews 9:1-5)

Sweet Reminders

I like to look at old photo albums. I see my mom and dad on their wedding day in 1945. I see me, just one month old, cradled in my dad's arms while my older sisters look on proudly. I see my own little ones, tiny and precious. These are sweet reminders of days gone by and of people I love so much.

Today's reading gives us sweet reminders. The Hebrew believers who read this letter would have recognized them immediately—the tent of meeting, the lampstand, the table and the sacred bread. Then the thick curtain, behind which they could not even peek. But they knew the golden altar was there, and the ark of the covenant with its special contents, and the mercy seat.

All these were reminders of God's presence, God's promised Messiah, God's mercy and love. We, too, have sweet reminders: Gethsemane's Garden, Calvary's Cross, the empty tomb. When we ponder them, we remember the gift of atonement—the reconciliation between God and man effected through sacrifice. By the sacrifice of our Savior, we are at-one with God. What a beautiful thing to remember each day!

Thank You, gracious Lord, for reminding me of Your loving sacrifice. Keep such sweet reminders before me each day. Amen.

Tuesday, April 1

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

(Hebrews 9:11-12)

What Was To Come Is Here!

When you grow up speaking a language, you naturally assimilate the grammar without necessarily understanding it. But when you try to learn a new language as an adult, the grammar isn't intuitive; you need to really understand what's going on with the sentence structure, the nouns and adjectives, and the tense of the verbs. There's a vast difference between "I'm going to marry him" and "I have married him."

Notice the verb tenses in our reading. "Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come." Christ appeared! The good things have come! The action has already taken place. It's a done deal.

We are used to thinking of Christ's redemptive work as having been completed. But for first-century Jewish believers this was a big, big deal. They had waited, as had their ancestors before them, for the Messiah. They had studied the prophecies, wondering when they would be fulfilled. Centuries had come and gone, and still they were waiting.

Finally, what was to come has come, and the good things [forgiveness, salvation, eternal life] "are now here." That's how the *God's Word* translation puts it. And it goes on to say that the sacrifice our Savior offered was "once and for all to free us forever." Notice how what happened in the past holds significance for the future, for your future and mine. Christ's completed sacrifice sets us free—free forever!

Dear Jesus, Thank You for the security I find in all You have done to rescue, redeem and restore me ... now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday, April 2

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:13-14)

For a Purpose

During Lent we often focus on God's motivation for sending His Son to die for us. We pause to ponder His deep, deep love that was willing to pay so great a price to bring wayward and rebellious people home to Himself. Another facet of our redemption that today's reading highlights is the purpose behind it. Christ spilled His holy, precious blood to purify us so that we could serve the living God.

The One who planned all this is not a distant deity or a theological construct. He is a living being. He is the living God! Through Jesus, He calls us to a living relationship, a relationship so close we can call Him "Abba." Abba is an Aramaic word meaning father, and it indicates a personal and intimate relationship of love and trust.

Jesus addressed God this way when He prayed in Gethsemane: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). Jesus' relationship as the Beloved Son with whom the Father was well pleased allowed Him to pour out His anguish yet leave the outcome fully in His Father's hands.

What helpful insight this provides as we consider the purpose for which we are redeemed. We serve the living God in the context of our relationship with Him. As His adopted sons and daughters, we respond in love and trust by offering ourselves as living sacrifices. And as Scripture reminds us, "This is truly the way to worship him" (Romans 12:2b NLT).

Dear Jesus, I give myself to You because You gave Your all for me. Amen.

Thursday, April 3

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 10:24-26)

Decisive Redemption

Picture a court room. You are the accused, and the evidence against you is overwhelming. But you have a defense attorney, an advocate. This is no ordinary advocate. He doesn't try to derail the prosecutor's accusations. He doesn't offer objections to the judge. He doesn't justify the intricate web of circumstances that compelled you to do the things of which you are charged. He doesn't do any of these things.

Instead, he does something radical, something unheard of. He tells the judge to condemn him. He allows the punishment you deserve to fall on himself. This is a picture of decisive redemption. The guilty party is set free because someone else took the penalty. The judge bangs his gavel; case closed.

The decisive redemption described in today's reading is the reason Scripture declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). My friend, this is true! Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. When Satan accuses you, when someone reminds you of how you have fallen, when your own memory stirs up past sins, believe what God's Word says. Because of your Savior, your Advocate, there is decisive redemption, once for all!

Dear Jesus, Thank You that by grace I am included in this once-for-all decisive redemption. Help me walk in the forgiveness, freedom and joy You purchased for me. Amen.

Friday, April 4

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 10:27-28)

Eagerly Waiting

Although we are still in the season of Lent, still remembering the necessity of Christ shedding His blood to atone for our sins, we can also look ahead. In fact, the writer of Hebrews encourages us to do this “eagerly.” And he tells us what it is we are looking forward to: the return of our Savior and our full salvation.

I wonder what that will be like. I suppose we each picture Christ’s return in different ways. St. Paul knew we would wonder about these things, so he explained: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

I suppose we each picture heaven in a different way, too. Scripture gives us glimpses, sketches of paradise, so to speak, but not a high-definition photo with every detail perfectly clear. I am content with what Jesus has told us: “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

Imagine—to be with the Lord forever in the place He has prepared. I am eagerly waiting for that!

Dear Jesus, Help me look forward eagerly to the day of Your return, and help me share this confident hope with those around me today. Amen.