

As it is
appointed
unto men
once to
die ...
So ...

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:27,28)

The above words taken from a letter in the Bible were originally written to firstly exhort and then warn individuals in the 1st Century, who had learnt of the great and eternal blessings to be acquired in Christ but were now showing signs of neglecting and despising such truths and hence more solemnly, Christ Himself.

Against the backdrop of two sobering facts, the writer seeks to underscore and impress upon both their and our minds, two other certainties that form the foundation and prospect of the “**so great salvation**” that God has made available in the Lord Jesus. It is these latter truths that can release us from the dread and fear of first two.

As it is appointed unto men once to die

The first sobering fact is the certain prospect of physical death. It is appointed to us, without respect of persons, such that none can evade. It may approach gradually or unexpectedly and obtrusively: we may hasten it with our folly or fend it off temporarily by healthy living or medication. We may attempt to thrust the truth from our mind, even laugh and joke at it in an attempt to belittle it, but bow to it we must. It is a **ONCE** off experience that we face because of that which the Bible calls the “**sting of death**”, which is SIN.

Death was never God's intent for man but Adam, the first man, forfeited his right to live by disobeying a simple prohibition placed upon him to test his loyalty and trust in God. It was by "**one man's disobedience that many were made sinners**" (Romans 5:19) and so the principle of sin and death is passed to us at conception. We see sins effects around and within us as we consider the drastic history of this world of which we are all part, and to which we all make our contribution. Indeed, the whole world is guilty before God.

But after this the judgment:

Death is the gateway into eternity and the ensuing judgment of God is as certain as death itself. Why should we think otherwise for we have been created as responsible and accountable beings, unlike the animals around us. The Bible warns persistently of this, and there are numerous instances of God righteously stepping in with judgments, having both physical and eternal consequences on those that perished. The universal flood in the day's of Noah has left the earth's surface scarred to this day, to remind and warn us.

Cremation of the body just changes its form and is a futile attempt by some to think that they can eliminate themselves by such an act. It is a most dreadful matter to leave this world outside of God's salvation to face that foretold day when "**death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death**" (Revelation 20:14).

So Christ was once offered ...

But the writer, inspired by the Spirit of God, has better desires for his readers and the weight of the argument that he wants them to grasp is this. That as certain as the once off experience of death that we face is, with all its solemnity, so Christ also was **ONCE** offered to bear the sins of many. He too died but His death, being voluntary, was distinctly different; death had no claims upon Him.

At His first appearance, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, He had no earthly father as ourselves and thus no inherited sinful nature. This becomes evident when you read His words and of His works divinely recorded in the Bible; all were of the purest motive and honouring to God the Father, from whom sent, on so vital a mission. He was truly an holy being, Immanuel, God with us.

It was consequential to the obedient sacrificial offering of Himself to God on the Cross outside Jerusalem many years ago, that Christ made Himself accountable for the sins of many individuals. In contrast to Adam the first man, it was written of the Son of God **“so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”** (Romans 5:19). These correspond to the many in our considered verse. Christ died that they might be forgiven and never be held accountable for their sins. Many take their sins into the grave seemingly having escaped retribution, but God knows; He will require justice.

And unto them that look for Him ...

Those that look for Christ do so because their confidence is in His offering. Being fully persuaded, they have repented of sin and by faith received Him as their Lord and Saviour with the certain hope of glory. Though they may die and their bodies await resurrection, when He appears again, it will not be to deal with them as sinners, but to receive them into the fullness of His **“so great salvation”**. It is those **“in Christ”** who do not look for judgment, but for Him.

This blessed hope is set in stark contrast to those who elsewhere in the letter are addressed as them **“who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”** (2:15) and those whose only remaining expectation as a consequence of their wilful sin against the truth is **“a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries”** (10:27). But it need not be that way for us. Is it What or Who we are looking for?