

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 448, 11-07-2021 †† Last Judgment

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

HEBREWS 9

²⁴For Christ did not enter a handmade sanctuary, a representation of the true sanctuary. Instead, He entered into heaven itself, now to appear before God on our behalf. ²⁵And He did not enter to offer Himself many times, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place year after year with blood that is not His own. ²⁶Otherwise He would have needed to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once and for all, at the climax of the ages, in order to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And, just as it is appointed for people to die only once and after this comes the judgment, ²⁸so also Christ was offered only once to take away the sins of many, and He will appear a second time—without sin—to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him.



It was often about a green mushroom. In Mario Brothers, the green mushroom was the way to win a 1-up. In fact, every video game had an “extra life,” the ultimate bonus. It was easy when you were playing with some sprite onscreen, some character, someone else’s blood, at no cost to you. You could always win another extra life ... or, if all else failed, hit the reset button and start over.

But imagine if you were the character in the video game; that pain would be real. That was the thrill of the 1980s cult hit “Tron.” Jeff Bridges risked being lost inside the video game. And being somehow trapped within a video game would not guarantee you extra lives. The finality of the letters “GAME OVER” pasted across a black field might be the end of it all, because that’s how life as a human being works. *It is appointed for man to die once, and, after that, to face judgment.* Every lesson we read today said so much, just not in so many words. Horace spoke in his “Odes,” *“Omnes una manet nox,”* “One night (death) awaits us all.” The Romans said, *“respice finem,”* “consider the end.” “You’re on earth, there’s no cure for that!” wrote Irish novelist, Samuel Beckett. Everyone who ever lived has risked death. That is what today is all about: considering the end.

Death is intimidating, and it happens so often we just cannot spend too much time dwelling on each one. Yet it seems elicited, immoral to treat it so cavalierly, as gallows humor in the military is the oft-used defense mechanism. How else can we cope with something so sad other than with dark humor? The loneliness and

fear and dark thoughts would surely consume us! The despair alone must depress us until we drift away like a mist! Meaningless, meaningless, says the Teacher, Solomon, as he dwells on the awful thought of death. “Nauseating” did the existential philosophers of the 20th century call human existence. We are disgusting creatures to be built so beautifully and yet so easily subject to death and decay. What sin has done to these bones!

What is the scheme or setup? Do we need a priest or substitute that offers the blood of a video game protagonist? Do we need to add up enough video game deaths to amount to eternity, if that’s how long we want to live? No.

It is appointed for man to die once, and, after that, to face judgment.

We are judged once for all. We are either approved or disapproved in the judgment—held guilty or justified. It is not dependent on the next video game character we can position between us and the final “GAME OVER,” nor is it dependent on the next fluffy critter we can shield ourselves for the final blow of justice. Nor is justice any respecter of persons, that we can avoid judgment by our good looks, skin color, class ranking, witty humor, or personal achievements.

No, but the judgment will be based on One Person’s performance. As the judgment was originally set up, that person would be: YOU. That was the pattern of the Law of God that held YOU guilty for what YOU do. But that wasn’t good enough, for since God promised eternal life by the Law if YOU could do it, He knew very quickly that YOU were unable to do it. In fact, such a day of judgment would be unnecessary unless YOU were imperfect, blemished, and sinful. You are responsible for such sin, too! You are the reason for this meaninglessness, disease, destruction, despair—your dirty, filthy talk and your deeds done when no one was looking. Your heart of stone has brought us to this point, and you are going to need a 1-up green mushroom, except ... now we are back talking as if the Law reigns, aren’t we? Instead the Law was weak to save and was paralyzed to promise anything to sinners.

So God decided that the judgment must be based on One Person’s performance, as I said, and that is the performance of Jesus Christ. “²⁸*So also Christ was offered only once to take away the sins of many.*” He did not need extra lives to accomplish the task, no green mushrooms or 1-ups, nor did He have multiple ‘takes’ or pre-recordings to make sure the performance was just right. He followed God’s will fully and never failed at any point. The Law of God

culminated in Jesus Christ as He showed He was its master and commander. Finally He shed blood for His innocence and was cruelly murdered for His lack of crimes. This was not the reward promised by the Law of God, and so the good news was He was now dead to the Law. And all who might be plunged into His death through the waters of baptism and the link of free faith is dead to that Law, too. This is God's Gospel, and on the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone are believers now judged.

If we needed to fashion continuous substitutes for ourselves, then Jesus Christ would have to be reincarnated and die for us multiple times—infinitesimal times—repeatedly and seemingly without end. The repetition of deaths would be off the charts. Nor would I doubt that Jesus Christ would be willing to do it. His love knows no bounds, for the death that He did pay—the crushing guilt of our crimes and the abandonment of the Father—was just that costly. His love knows no limit, for His grace increases wherever there is an increase of sin.

No, in Jesus Christ, the setup isn't so much extra lives or 1-ups. The setup is now something more like an ongoing, perpetual Mario star, an invincibility code for the ages. Sometimes in video games you can punch in some fancy code that makes you invincible, invulnerable to any attacks. You roam the world freely without any harm done, even if the enemies are after you. Even if they are dealing their greatest hits, the invincible gamer is free and clear of any damage done.

The same applies to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, everyone who trusts in Him at the judgment. For Christ "*will appear a second time—without sin—to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him.*" The Savior, Jesus Christ, is dead to the Law, so He has paid with His blood for your life at the end of time. You see, Christ is unrepeatable propitiation, Christ is the unlimited atonement, Christ is the once-for-all time, once-for-all men offering, Christ is the climax of the ages, Christ is the eternal Word of holy God to unholy sinners ...

CHRIST IS THE LAST WORD ON EXTRA LIVES

... so in His name, we say **Amen**.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**.