

Hebrews 9:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Analysis

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

This verse establishes two universal human realities: universal mortality and subsequent judgment. "It is appointed" (apokeitai, ἀπόκειται) means decreed, destined, laid up—death is humanity's divinely appointed lot, not random chance. This appointment stems from sin's entrance into the world (Romans 5:12, Genesis 2:17). "Unto men" (tois anthrōpois, τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) indicates the universal scope—all humans, without exception (excluding Enoch and Elijah who were translated, and believers alive at Christ's return).

"Once to die" (hapax apothanein, ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν) emphasizes death's singularity—humans die once, not repeatedly. This contradicts reincarnation and demonstrates the urgency of decision in this life. There are no second chances after death to alter one's eternal destiny. The timing is fixed; the appointment cannot be rescheduled.

"But after this the judgment" (meta de touto krisis, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις) establishes the sequence: death, then judgment. The definite article with "judgment" indicates the final, eschatological judgment when all humanity stands before God (Revelation 20:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10). This judgment evaluates how people lived and determines eternal destiny. The verse's context (comparing Christ's once-for-all sacrifice to repeated sacrifices) emphasizes that just as humans die once and face judgment once, Christ offered Himself once, never to be

repeated (v. 28). The parallel underscores both the finality of death and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

Historical Context

Death was an ever-present reality in the first century—infant mortality, disease, violence, persecution, crucifixions. Average life expectancy was around 30-35 years. For Jewish Christians facing martyrdom, this verse provided both sobering warning and comforting assurance. The warning: death leads immediately to judgment—no purgatory, no soul-sleep, no reincarnation. Each person faces God's tribunal based on their response to Christ during earthly life. The comfort: Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to avert judgment's condemnation for believers. Greek philosophy offered various speculations about afterlife: Epicurean annihilation, Platonic soul immortality, Stoic cosmic dissolution. Judaism taught Sheol/Hades but developed clearer resurrection doctrine during the Second Temple period. Christianity proclaimed unprecedented clarity: conscious existence after death, bodily resurrection, final judgment, eternal destinies (heaven or hell). The parallel between humanity's single death/judgment and Christ's single sacrifice (v. 28) demonstrated that just as there's no escape from appointed death, there's no supplementary sacrifice needed beyond Christ's perfect offering.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of death and judgment affect your priorities and daily decisions?

2. Why is the 'once to die' principle crucial for understanding the urgency of the gospel?
3. How does this verse refute belief in reincarnation or second chances after death?
4. What comfort does Christ's once-for-all sacrifice provide when facing the reality of judgment?
5. How should awareness of coming judgment motivate evangelism and holy living?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	καθ'	ὅσον	ἀπόκειται	τοῖς	ἀνθρώποις	ᾗπαξ
And	as	G3745	it is appointed	G3588	unto men	once
G2532	G2596		G606		G444	G530
ἀποθανεῖν	μετὰ	δὲ	τοῦτο	κρίσις		
to die	after	but	this	the judgment		
G599	G3326	G1161	G5124	G2920		

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:10 (Judgment): For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (Parallel theme): Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

2 Samuel 14:14 (Parallel theme): For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

Acts 17:31 (Judgment): Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 (Judgment): For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 (Parallel theme): For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

Jude 1:15 (Judgment): To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Ecclesiastes 3:20 (Parallel theme): All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 (Judgment): Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

2 Timothy 4:1 (Judgment): I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;