VOL. 09 NO. 6,
AUGUST, 2025
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

Exegesis on Sufficiency of Jesus' ἐφάπαξ Sacrifice for Past, Present and Future Sins of the Elect in Hebrews 7:27

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v9i6.045

Abstract
A contextual overview of Hebrews 7:27 situates the verse within the broader argument of the book of Hebrews, stresses the typological precedent set by Melchizedek, and the finality of Jesus' atonement. Despite extensive theological discourse on the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, ambiguity persists in contemporary scholarship regarding the temporal scope of His atonement, specifically, whether it fully encompasses the past, present, and future sins of the elect. The exegesis highlights how Jesus' singular offering resolves the insufficiencies of the Old Testament sacrificial system, ensuring complete forgiveness for all temporal dimensions of sin for the elect. The Book of Hebrews advocates the sufficiency and finality of Jesus' sacrificial death, presenting it as a comprehensive atonement for sin. While the text does not explicitly use the phrase "past, present, and future sins," its theological framework strongly implies this all-encompassing scope. In Hebrews 7:27, Jesus "sacrificed for sins once for all" (ephapax), contrasting with the repetitive, incomplete sacrifices of the Old Testament. This "once for all" expression underscores the eternal efficacy of His work. The objective of research is to clarify the temporal reach of Christ's atonement, how it applies to sins committed before, during, and after His crucifixion, and assess the pastoral significance of this doctrine for the assurance of salvation among believers. The study engages with a broad spectrum of scholarly works to provide a comprehensive analysis of this pivotal biblical text. By employing a rigorous exegetical methodology rooted in historical-critical interpretation and theological reflection, this work investigates the once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice (ἐφάπαξ, *ephapax*), its superiority over the Levitical priesthood, and its implications for the assurance of salvation for believers. This study fills critical gaps in contemporary scholarship by addressing ambiguities surrounding the scope of Christ's sacrifice and its enduring efficacy. Furthermore, it underscores the practical implications

of this theological truth for Christian assurance and spiritual confidence. Through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates biblical studies, theology, and hermeneutics, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of Christ's redemptive work and its transformative impact on the lives of believers.

Keywords: ἐφάπαξ Sacrifice, Christ's atonement, Melchizedek, The elect, Past-Present-Future sins

Introduction

The book of Hebrews stands as a theological masterpiece within the New Testament, with Hebrews 7:27 serving as a pivotal verse that encapsulates the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial death. This verse highlights the contrast between the repetitive sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood and the singular, efficacious offering of Jesus Christ, who, as the ultimate high priest, offered Himself once for all to atone for the sins of the elect across all time. Recent scholarship, including contributions from John Piper (2004) and N.T. Wright (2016) has emphasised the verse's role in connecting Old Testament typology, particularly the figure of Melchizedek, with New Testament fulfilment. However, gaps remain in exploring the temporal scope of Christ's sacrifice and its practical implications for believers' assurance of salvation.

This research aims to deepen understanding of Hebrews 7:27 by examining the theological weight of the term "ephapax" (once for all) and its relevance to the past, present, and future sins of the elect. Through a multidisciplinary approach, combining historical-critical exegesis, theological reflection, and comparative analysis, the study investigates how this verse affirms the finality of Christ's atonement, distinguishes His priesthood from the Levitical order, and fosters spiritual confidence among believers. Ultimately, the research contributes to both academic theology and pastoral ministry by clarifying the enduring efficacy of Christ's sacrifice and its transformative impact on Christian assurance. It offers a robust framework for understanding salvation not merely as a doctrinal concept but as a lived reality grounded in the once-for-all redemptive act of Jesus Christ.

Contextual Overview of Hebrews 7:27

To effusively appreciate the theological richness of Hebrews 7:27, it is essential to situate the verse within the broader literary and theological framework of the book of Hebrews. Written to a predominantly Jewish-Christian audience facing persecution and wavering in their faith, the epistle seeks to anchor its readers in the supremacy of Christ and the sufficiency of His redemptive work. The author constructs a masterful argument that contrasts the old covenant's inadequacies with the new covenant's transformative power, culminating in the declaration of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice in Hebrews 7:27. To acknowledge the power of Christ's sacrifice, the author introduces the phrase "once for all." These words appeared in 7:27

and 9:12. In this passage, the author uses "once for all" repetitively, seven times (9:26,27,28; 10:2,10,12,14) to concentrate on the significance and power of Christ's sacrifice.

The immediate context of Hebrews 7:27 unfolds within chapters 6 and 7, where the author shifts from warnings about apostasy to a description of Christ's high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Chapter 6 closes with a reference to Abraham's blessing and oath, setting the stage for the typological comparison between Melchizedek and Christ in chapter 7. Verses 1-10 found Melchizedek as a mysterious yet authoritative figure, prefiguring Christ's eternal priesthood. William Lane (1988) and Harold Attridge (1989) vividly portray how this typology underscores the permanence and transcendence of Christ's priesthood, which surpasses the temporary and earthly nature of the Levitical system.

Hebrews 7:11-28 then elaborates on the superiority of Christ's priesthood, contrasting it with the limitations of the Aaronic priesthood. Verses 11-19 argue that the Levitical priesthood, rooted in the Mosaic law, was inherently inadequate to bring about perfection. The author asserts that the introduction of a new priesthood necessitates a change in the law itself, pointing to the fulfilment of the old covenant in Christ. This section is pivotal for understanding Hebrews 7:27, as it establishes the theological foundation for Christ's unique role as both priest and sacrifice. Richard Hays (2016) upholds the eschatological significance of this transition, noting how Christ's priesthood inaugurates a new era of admittance to God.

Verses 20-25 further develop the theme of Christ's eternal priesthood, stressing the permanence and effectiveness of His intercession. The author highlights the oath of God, which appoints Christ as a priest forever, contrasting this divine guarantee with the transient nature of Levitical priests. This permanence is crucial for interpreting Hebrews 7:27, as it underscores the enduring efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. As stated by Hoffmann (2013), this permanence not only fulfils the typological precedent set by Melchizedek but also assures believers of Christ's persistent advocacy on their behalf.

Hebrews 7:26-28 then climaxes the argument by presenting Christ as the perfect high priest who offers Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. Verse 26 designates Him as holy, blameless, and set apart from sinners, qualities that distinguish Him from the Levitical priests who were themselves sinful and required purification. Verse 27 overtly contrasts Christ's once-for-all offering with the repetitive sacrifices of the Levitical system, underlining the finality and sufficiency of His atonement. Andreas Köstenberger (2020) argues that this verse encapsulates the central thesis of Hebrews: Christ's sacrifice is qualitatively superior because it achieves what the old covenant could not accomplish, and eternal redemption.

The broader theological context of Hebrews reinforces the significance of Hebrews 7:27 by framing Christ's sacrifice within the narrative of God's redemptive plan. The epistle consistently portrays Christ as the fulfilment of Old Testament types and shadows, particularly in His roles as high priest, sacrifice, and mediator of the new covenant. Hebrews 9:11-14, for instance, expands on the sufficiency of Christ's blood, while Hebrews 10:1-18 reiterates the once-for-all nature of His offering. Together, these passages affirm that Christ's sacrifice not only addresses the problem of sin but also inaugurates a new relationship between God and humanity, one founded on grace rather than law.

Melchizedek as a Model

The typological connection between Melchizedek and Christ serves as a foundational element in the theological framework of Hebrews, particularly in underscoring the uniqueness and sufficiency of Christ's priesthood. Melchizedek, introduced in Genesis 14:18-20 and referenced in Psalm 110:4, surfaces as a shadowy yet overpoweringly significant figure whose priesthood prefigures the eternal and unrepeatable nature of Christ's atonement. Beavis and Kim-Cragg (2015) and Attridge (1989) uphold the interpretive significance of Melchizedek in Hebrews, noting how the author strategically employs this enigmatic figure to establish Christ's priesthood as superior to the Levitical system.

Melchizedek's role as a type of Christ is initially established in Hebrews 7:1-10, where the author highlights three key characteristics: his kingship, his priesthood, and his lack of genealogical record. As both king of Salem and priest of God Most High, Melchizedek embodies a dual office that anticipates Christ's combined roles as King and High Priest. This duality is crucial for understanding Hebrews 7:27, as it accentuates the comprehensive nature of Christ's redemptive work. Unlike the Levitical priests, who were constrained by their lineage and mortality, Melchizedek's priesthood is depicted as timeless and unbounded, foreshadowing the eternal nature of Christ's priesthood. Beavis and Kim-Cragg (2015), argue that this typology reinforces the argument that Christ's priesthood transcends the limitations of the old covenant, offering a permanent solution to humanity's sin problem.

The absence of Melchizedek's genealogy further amplifies the typological significance of his priesthood as stated in Hebrews 7:3. Digging down memory lane, the author presents Melchizedek as a prototype of Christ, whose priesthood is not bound by human descent or the cycles of birth and death. This typological continuity between Melchizedek and Christ is essential for interpreting Hebrews 7:27, as it highlights the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, a single, definitive act that fulfils and surpasses the repetitive offerings of the Levitical priests. Young (1979) affirms that these sacrificial themes find their ultimate fulfilment and practical expression in the person and work of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews notes that, when it came to the Aaronic priests, no oath was ever involved with their ordination (v. 21). They were simply appointed to fill this role Exo. 28:1). As Hughes (1993) points out, the Aaronic priests ascended to their position, not based on a divine oath, but rather because of divine order. But with Jesus, His "ascension" (literally) to this position was accompanied by an oath. In effect, v. 22 substantiates this interpretation when it says, "by so much more that is, by the oath, Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant." The word translated "surety" or "guarantor" is used to speak of the permanence of the priesthood of Jesus. As Leon Morris (1981) attentively construes that the oath declares the drive of God in an absolute style. The new priesthood is permanent. There is no problem of its ever being done away. In the same line of thought, Phillips (2006) is very helpful in the study of these verses. He observes that verse 26 highlights the character of Jesus: for such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens. As the priesthood of Jesus has been confirmed forever, the salvation of the believer is forever settled. Eberhart (2018) unveils that Hebrews aims at

ingeniously shifting the content of the metaphor. For the first time, it adapts the concept "sacrifice" regarding the death of Jesus on the cross by coalescing it with "blood" (7:27; 10:10, 12, 14). Hebrews consequently changes and transcends traditional sacrificial metaphors to recommend that Christ finished his salvation work through his death (2:14).

Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood in Divergence from Levitical Priests

The superiority of Jesus' priesthood over the Levitical priesthood is a central theme in Hebrews, articulated with particular clarity in Hebrews 7:27. To anchor this, Ladd (1979) substantiates the assertion on a strong footing that Jesus stands as a High Priest forever. This superiority is multifaceted, encompassing Christ's divine nature, His sinless character, and the eternal efficacy of His sacrifice. Together, these attributes distinguish Jesus' priesthood as qualitatively superior to the Levitical system, which was inherently limited by human frailty and the repetitive nature of its offerings. Scholarly analyses by Köstenberger (2020), Rowan Williams (2014), and David Moffitt (2019) portray these differences, providing a robust framework for understanding why Christ's priesthood is uniquely suited to accomplish God's redemptive purposes. The verse drives home the reality that Jesus is a perfectly appropriate, eternal Priest who forever intercedes for believers. Unlike the Aaronic priesthood, Jesus did not and does not offer a sacrifice daily either for His own sins or for people's sins. The fundamental reason is that, as MacArthur (1983) avers that sinlessness needs no sacrifice. Additionally, the text explains that Jesus offered His sinless life on behalf of believers once for all. That weighty phrase is found in 9:12 and 10:10, and it validates that no more sacrifices are needed because of the uniqueness of this Priest. One of the most striking features of Jesus' priesthood is His divine nature, which sets Him apart from the Levitical priests who were mere mortals. Hebrews 7:26 describes Jesus as "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."

The eternal efficacy of Christ's sacrifice constitutes another defining feature of His priesthood's superiority. Hebrews 7:27 explicitly contrasts Christ's once-for-all offering with the repetitive sacrifices of the Levitical priests, who were required to perform daily rituals to atone for sins. Scholars such as Eberhart and Schweitzer (2019) aver that the Hebrew author's narrative is more interested in concentrating all main parameters of early Jewish temple worship on Jesus alone. To explore further, Attridge (1989) expressed the theological significance of this contrast, noting that the repetitive nature of the Levitical sacrifices underscores their inability to achieve lasting redemption. In contrast, Christ's sacrifice is described as *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ), a term that conveys the singularity and finality of His offering. This once-for-all nature ensures that Christ's atonement is not only sufficient but also irreversible, securing eternal redemption for the elect. Hagner (2002) argues about the mediatory role of Christ as follows. First, Christ's mediatory role occupies two offices: Christ as once for all sacrifice, that of a prophet and that of a priest. As a prophet, He represents God to humanity and, as a priest, He represents humanity to God. These functions are intertwined; they cannot be separated. As full deity and human, Christ enables Himself to be an all-sufficient sacrifice that constitutes the New Covenant. Moreover, Christ's death constitutes a

new time frame in salvation history (Heb. 9:15). Vigorous scholarly attestation reveals that Christ's mediatorship has the potential to intercede for the past, present, and future actions (Loader 2020; Dunnil 1992). By offering Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice, Christ establishes a new covenant that transforms the lives of believers and ensures their eternal redemption. This superiority is central to the argument of Hebrews 7:27 and underscores the sufficiency of Christ's atonement for the past, present, and future sins of the elect.

The stark contrast between Jesus' priesthood and the Levitical priesthood is a recurring motif in Hebrews, and Hebrews 7:27 serves as a pivotal declaration of this divergence. Through careful exegesis and theological reflection, Christ, not the Leviticus priests, offered a sacrifice that was satisfactory to God (MacLeod, 1989). In this argument, Hebrews 10:5, 6 are treated together because of their theological and contextual similarity. Psalm 110 and Jeremiah 31 are respectively used to indicate the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Leviticus priesthood, and the inferiority of the Sinaitic covenant concerning the new covenant, the better covenant in Jesus' blood.

Christ's priesthood and that of the Levitical priests, in contrast, are not merely a matter of degree but represent a qualitative transformation regarding the nature of priesthood and atonement. One of the most evident contrasts lies in the repetitive nature of the Levitical sacrifices versus the once-for-all character of Christ's offering. The Levitical priests were required to perform daily rituals, offering sacrifices repeatedly for their own sins and those of the people (Hebrews 7:27) (Marshall, 2004). These offerings, prescribed by the Mosaic law, were inherently insufficient to achieve lasting forgiveness. Lane (1991) reveals that the very repetitiveness of these sacrifices portrays their inability to resolve humanity's sin problem definitively. Each act of atonement served as a temporary measure, pointing forward to the ultimate solution yet incapable of fulfilling it. In contrast, Christ's sacrifice is described as *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ), a term that conveys singularity and finality.

Another critical distinction is the inherent inadequacy of the Levitical system to bring about perfection. Hebrews 7:11-19 explicitly argues that the Levitical priesthood, rooted in the Mosaic law, was unable to perfect those who drew near to God. The author of Hebrews asserts that if perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no need for a new priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Eberhart and Schweitzer 2019) underscore that the Levitical system was designed to point forward to Christ, serving as a shadow rather than the substance of true redemption. Its ceremonial observances and external regulations could not cleanse the conscience or secure eternal redemption. In contrast, Christ's priesthood fulfils the typological patterns of the old covenant, offering a sacrifice that resolves the sin problem once and for all. His offering is not merely an improvement upon the Levitical system but its definitive replacement, rendering it obsolete in light of the new covenant.

The limitations imposed by human frailty further highlight the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priests were themselves sinners, requiring purification before they could offer sacrifices on behalf of others. This reality underscores the provisional and imperfect nature of their ministry. Eberhart (2017) contended that the sinfulness of the Levitical priests necessitated a mediator who could bridge the gap between God and humanity

without being hindered by personal sin. Christ is said to have gone to heaven and, through his own sacrifice that materialised only once, successfully expunged sin for all time. Christ, as the sinless Son of God, uniquely fulfils this role. His holiness and blamelessness qualify Him to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice, achieving what the Levitical priests could never accomplish. According to Youngblood (1997), sacrifice in the Old Testament, as a final point, portrayed the final perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the ultimate substitute.

The Levitical priests were bound by the cycles of life and death, their ministries ending with their physical demise. This mortality rendered their priesthood inherently transient and incomplete. In contrast, Nelson (2003) asserts that Christ's priesthood is described as eternal, established by the oath of God in Psalm 110:4. Christ's sacrifice of Himself exceeded the Leviticus sacrifices.

The Sufficiency of Jesus' Sacrifice (Perfection)

The perfection of Jesus' sacrifice, as articulated in Hebrews 7:27, represents the culmination of the author's theological argument regarding the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. This perfection is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a substantive claim rooted in the unique attributes of Christ's priesthood and the transformative efficacy of His offering. Many scholars focus on the notion of Christ, who committed Himself to submitting His body to achieve what all burnt and sin offerings were incapable of attaining (Delitzsch, 1978; Edgcumbe, 1977). Hays (2016) and Horton (2011) have explored the multifaceted dimensions of this perfection, upholding how it fulfils the redemptive purposes of God and secures eternal redemption for the elect. By examining the singularity of Christ's offering, its ability to cleanse the conscience, and its establishment of a new covenant, this section elucidates why Jesus' sacrifice is described as perfect and sufficient for all temporal dimensions of sin (Lindars, 1991).

This once-for-all character is not merely a historical fact but a theological declaration of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. However, Allen (2016) explores the extent to which the atonement notion raises the question of whose sins Christ died for. And the two recognised options are whether Christ died for all men or for only those who will believe? Limited atonement entails that Christ died for the elect only, and unlimited atonement entails that Christ died for all people. John Owen (2016) argues that Jesus intended to save some people and did save some people and not all people; therefore, he died only for specific people. According to E. H. Palmer (2014) and Owen (2016), Christ died only for the believer, the sheep, or the elect, only for those who will truly be redeemed and get eternal life. Several passages allude to the particularity of atonement that Christ died for "his sheep or elect" or brethren (Isa. 53:5, Jn. 10:11, 15; Rom 8:33; Heb. 2:11), "his church" (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25), and "his people" (Matt. 1:21, 20:28, 26:28). Arthur Pink (2011), balances the extent of Christ's atonement being satisfactory imputed to the elect only from the mission God gave Christ to save sinners and promised him a reward in Isa. 53:10.

Most Calvinists key into the particularist view on the atonement, which refers to limited atonement or particular redemption. It states that only the elect will be saved. As stated by

Louis Berkhof (2007), Reformed theology teaches that Christ's death aimed to save the elect only. To Loraine Boettner (2017), the atonement Christ made has an infinite value; he offered a priceless sacrifice. However, the benefits of the atonement are constrained to those for whom it was predestined, and are functional to specific persons, for those who are saved." Accordingly, the efficacy of the atonement is limited by God's intent, not by inadequacy of its worth. Moreover, Christ alludes to the elect when he spoke about those that the Father gives him (John 6:37-39). Hodge (2014) takes this argument to the next level by comparing Christ's priestly role to that of the Aaronic priest, saying that the Old Testament priest mediated for only those for whom he made sacrifices, so Jesus also made a sacrifice for only those on whose behalf he mediated before the Father.

In contrast to the foregoing position on the extent of the atonement is the contention that Christ atoned for the sin of everyone, though the benefits of his atonement can be enjoyed by only those who accept the Christian gospel (Elwell, 2001). Scholars who hold to this position maintain that the atonement is unlimited in its call but limited in its application (Houdmann, 2014). This depicts that God calls all people to experience his salvation; yet, only those who respond in faith to the gospel message enjoy the atonement. Following this, salvation is seen as universal in the provisional sense, but conditional in its practicality to a person. The universal aspect of the atonement signifies its sufficiency in dealing with the sin of the entire human race, while the conditional aspect of its application stresses the need for one to respond to the gospel by faith (Jn. 3:16 and Jn 1:29). J. C. Ryle made a point from John's declaration that Christ is a Saviour for all humankind. He did not suffer for a few persons only, but for all humanity (cited in Erickson, 2013). Beza contends that "the whole world" in this context implies "of them which have accepted the Gospel by faith in all ages, degrees, and places, for there is no salvation without Christ." Christ's death is profitable to no one but the elect who believe in His Name (cited in Harding…2013).

Argument for Unlimited or universal atonement Universal atonement stipulates that "He died for the sins of all humanity with equal intent (he died for the sins of all as he equally intends their salvation (Allen, 2016)." In other words, the doctrine states that Jesus died as a propitiation for the benefit of all humans without exception. This view is popular in Arminianism and among other non-Calvinists. Robert Lightner (1998) Christ died for his chosen, but this does not nullify the passages that address the same to many, to all, and the whole world. Lightner (1998) makes a defensive assertion that when the Bible mentions Christ dying for particular people or groups, it doesn't mean He didn't die for others. These passages simply highlight certain recipients of His sacrifice, but they never suggest that anyone is excluded. Scripture never states that Christ did *not* die for all humanity.

The study eventually deduced from the flow of arguments that atonement is restricted in its efficacy since not all people are going to be saved. The study infers that the perfection of Christ's sacrifice lies in its ability to resolve the sin problem comprehensively, addressing the past, present, and future sins of the elect. This singularity ensures that no additional sacrifices are necessary, as Christ's offering fully satisfies the demands of divine justice and inaugurates a new era of grace. Hauling in the same direction Morris (1983), Wright (2020), MacDonald

(1971) and Attridge (1989) are unanimous concerning the fact that the blood-life sacrifice of Jesus Christ made eternal atonement for sins, impacting the whole being, both externally and internally, liberating the soul, mind, heart and body, and making forgiveness of sins an eternally acquired, living reality.

The perfection of Jesus' sacrifice is further demonstrated by its ability to cleanse the conscience, a transformative dimension absents in the Levitical system. Hebrews 9:14 declares that Christ's blood cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, highlighting the internal renewal achieved through His offering. Unlike the external rituals of the Levitical priests, which focused on ceremonial purity and outward observance, Christ's sacrifice penetrates the innermost recesses of the human heart, addressing the root causes of sin and alienation from God. By purifying the conscience, Christ's atonement ("once for all" (ephapax) enables believers to approach God with confidence and worship Him with sincerity, fostering a deep and abiding relationship characterised by trust and intimacy (Cockerill, 2012; Johnson, 2006).

The study aligns with the flow of thoughts on the universality of Christ's sacrifice, portraying its perfection, as it extends beyond the confines of ethnic Israel to encompass all believers. Unlike the Levitical priesthood, which was limited to the nation of Israel, Christ's priesthood is inclusive and universal, breaking down barriers and creating a new community of faith. The perfection of Christ's sacrifice is reflected in its ability to unite diverse peoples under the banner of grace, fostering reconciliation and unity within the body of Christ. This inclusivity is rooted in the typological precedent of Melchizedek, whose priesthood transcended tribal and national boundaries.

Exegesis of Hebrews 7:27

Greek (NA28):

ὃς οὐκ ἔχει καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνάγκην, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἁμαρτιῶν θυσίας ἀναφέρειν, ἔπειτα τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν ἐφάπαξ ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας.

Translation:

"Who does not have daily necessity, as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people; for this he did once for all when he offered up himself." ἐφάπαξ is an adjective from epi and hapax; it is rendered once for all, or upon one occasion (only), (at) once (for all) (Strong, 2001). The rendering denotes that Jesus offered a sacrifice for sin once upon the cross. His death was a singular event (cf. Heb. 10:12, 14). No sacrifice beyond that point was needed. He was never required to repeat the sacrifice for sin, but He intercedes for us day by day based on one final sacrifice. When this Priest (Christ) offered Himself, once was sufficient to fulfil and ratify the covenant and perfect those who are under it. (v. 27; 1 Peter 3:183). It is attested that only blood brings forgiveness. As evident in Leviticus 17:11, blood shall make atonement for the soul (BDAG, 2000). The Hebrew verb translated "to atone" (*kpr*) carries the basic meaning to "cover over" with the extended nuance of "atone, make amends" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 1987).

Hebrews 7:27 contrasts the repetitive, imperfect sacrifices of Levitical priests with the singular, perfect sacrifice of Christ. ἐφάπαξ (ephapax); Once for all. This is a crucial theological term emphasising finality and sufficiency. Christ's offering is once-for-all, eliminating the need for repetition. The finality of Christ's sacrifice is central to Hebrews' theology. His self-offering fulfils and surpasses the entire sacrificial system (Thayer, 1995). The phrase "once for all" (ἐφάπαξ) is echoed in Hebrews 9:12; 10:10, and it forms the basis of a new covenant theology. Jesus willingly offers to the Father the human life that others have failed to live, embodying the principle that "sacrifice is as gift" (ἡ θυσία ἐστίν καθὼς ἡ δωρεά). The New Testament consistently uses sacrificial language to articulate the benefits of the Cross, especially the cleansing of conscience from dead works (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 14, 25). This cleansing is inseparable from the restoration of a perfect relationship with God, made possible δηὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ "through his sacrifice." Christ, indeed, is ἡ πηγή τῆς σχέσεως παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ "the source of relationship with God."

A detailed exegesis of Hebrews 7:27 reveals the theological depth and pastoral significance of this pivotal verse, which encapsulates the sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial death for the sins of the elect. Central to this analysis is the phrase *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ), which denotes the once-for-all nature of Christ's offering. Moisés Silva (2005), Andreas Köstenberger (2020), and Peter O'Brien (2010) have stressed the significance of lexical precision in interpreting crucial terms, and their methodologies inform this study's close examination of the syntax, semantics, and literary structure of Hebrews 7:27. The purpose of Jesus' sacrifice is to do away with sin. Here, the phrase "once for all" is important. It comes from the Greek word "hapax" (ἅπαξ) or "ephapax" (ἐφάπαξ). This entails "a single occurrence to the exclusion of any other similar occurrence; once and for all, once and never again." Jesus' coming and death on the cross happened once in history, and will never happen again.

The verse begins with a direct contrast between Christ and the Levitical priests: "He does not need to offer sacrifices day by day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself" (NIV). The opening clause underscores the inadequacy of the Levitical system, which required daily sacrifices to atone for sins. As echoed by Lane (1991), the repetitive nature of these offerings highlights their inability to achieve lasting redemption. The author of Hebrews deliberately juxtaposes this insufficiency with the singular efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, which resolves the sin problem definitively. The use of the negative participle "does not need" (*οὐκ ἔχει*) serves to emphasise Christ's freedom from the constraints of the Levitical system, reinforcing His unique role as both priest and sacrifice.

The phrase *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ) is central to understanding the theological significance of Hebrews 7:27. Derived from the preposition *epi* ("upon") and the adverb *hapax* ("once"), the term conveys the idea of a single, decisive act with enduring consequences. Köstenberger (2020) argues that *ephapax* encapsulates the finality and irreversibility of Christ's sacrifice, distinguishing it sharply from the repetitive offerings of the Levitical priests. This interpretation aligns with the broader argument of Hebrews, which stresses the fulfilment of the old covenant in Christ. The once-for-all nature of His offering ensures that no additional

sacrifices are necessary, as Christ's atonement fully satisfies the demands of divine justice and inaugurates a new era of grace.

The closing clause, "when he offered himself," further underlines the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. Unlike the Levitical priests, who offered animal sacrifices on behalf of the people, Christ offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. This self-offering is a defining feature of His priesthood, reflecting His voluntary and sacrificial love for humanity. MacLeod (1989) and Nelson (2003) portray the Christological implications of this self-offering, noting that it fulfils the typological precedent set by Melchizedek and establishes Christ's priesthood as qualitatively superior to the Levitical system. The reflexive pronoun "himself" (*ἑαυτὸν)* emphasises the personal and intentional nature of Christ's sacrifice, underscoring His agency and authority in accomplishing redemption.

From a syntactical perspective, the verse employs a chiastic structure that reinforces its theological message. The initial contrast between Christ and the Levitical priests is mirrored in the concluding affirmation of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. This literary device serves to highlight the qualitative difference between the two systems, drawing attention to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. Barker and Kohlenberger's (1999) interpretation aligns well with the broader theological consensus. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (KJV). This verse marks the climax of the argument that Christ's sacrifice is final and sufficient. Once sins are truly forgiven, no further sacrifice is needed. this verse stresses the total removal of sin's penalty through Christ's sacrifice. The Greek word *aphesis* implies a release or pardon, meaning that the need for continual offerings under the Old Covenant is abolished. The verse concludes the argument that animal sacrifices were insufficient. Christ's perfect sacrifice means that "there is no longer any offering for sin," and those who reject it are left without any remedy for sin. It challenges current sacrificial practices, for example, the Catholic Mass, as having "no foundation in Scripture" if Christ's sacrifice is strictly once-for-all. The needs are met only by One who, having Himself been proven sinless, offers Himself as an expiatory sacrifice on behalf of men (Strong, 2001; TDNT, 1967). In that way, he became the guarantee of salvation to the faithful. He did so by securing the salvation that could not otherwise be obtained. Thus, as the author states, Jesus is the "surety" (*engous*) of the "better covenant" (*kreittonos diathēkēs*, cf. Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) by guaranteeing that the terms of the new covenant would be fully met for his people.

Semantically, the verb "to offer" (*προσφέρω*) carries rich theological connotations, denoting the act of presenting something to God as an offering or sacrifice. In the context of Hebrews 7:27, this verb underscores the priestly role of Christ, who mediates between God and humanity by presenting Himself as the perfect sacrifice. The use of the aorist tense (*προσήνεγκεν*) indicates a completed action, stressing the definitive and irreversible nature of Christ's offering. Silva (2005) asserts that this semantic nuance reinforces the once-for-all character of Christ's sacrifice, ensuring its enduring efficacy for the sins of the elect.

In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek verb *exilaskomai*, often rendered as "atonement," carries the nuance of "appeasement" (BDAG, 2000). Within its religious and broader cultural framework, the term suggests that sin provokes divine anger, resulting in potential wrath

against the offender. To reconcile with the divine, a compensatory act, such as offering a gift or performing a specific ritual, was required. Upon acceptance of such an offering, the deities were appeased, and harmony was restored between the divine and human parties.

Uniqueness of Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice (ἐφάπαξ, ephapax)

The term *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ) occupies a central position in the theological discourse of Hebrews 7:27, encapsulating the definitive and irreversible nature of Christ's sacrificial death. Köstenberger (2020) and O'Brien (2010) have noted, this term is not merely a linguistic descriptor but a profound theological statement about the sufficiency and finality of Christ's atonement. A nuanced exploration of *ephapax* reveals its layered meanings, its implications for soteriology, and its capacity to anchor the believer's assurance in the unchanging efficacy of Christ's work. *there is only one person*, Jesus Christ, who qualifies as the mediator between God and man. *There is only one sacrifice*, that of Jesus Christ, that can atone for sin. *There is only one great high priest*, Jesus Christ, through faith in whom we find eternal life. By being exalted to the heavenly realm, this phrase points to his transcendent glory and would encompass his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, glorification, and seating at the Father's right hand. He has departed from this earthly sphere in which sin reigns and has entered the heavenly realm in his Father's presence, where no sin is allowed, exalted above the heavens.

At its core, *ephapax* denotes a singular, decisive act that achieves its intended purpose completely and permanently. Derived from the preposition *epi* ("upon") and the adverb *hapax* ("once"), the term conveys the idea of an action performed once with enduring consequences. Strong (2001) ascertains that *ephapax* contrasts sharply with the repetitive sacrifices of the Levitical system, which were inherently insufficient to achieve lasting redemption. The Levitical priests were required to offer sacrifices repeatedly, a practice that underscored their inability to resolve humanity's sin problem definitively. In contrast, Christ's sacrifice is described as *ephapax*, signifying that His offering is not only singular but also final (Stählin, 1967). This singularity ensures that no additional sacrifices are necessary, as Christ's atonement fully satisfies the demands of divine justice and inaugurates a new era of grace.

Dods (1970) and Moffat (1924) have linked the phrase in Hebrews 10:12 to the verb "He sat down in perpetuity", which watered down the veracity that Christ's one sacrifice is everlastingly effective. However, other sages link the phrase to the foregoing one, "one sacrifice for sins for all time." Westcott (1984) and Hughes (1977) stress the eternal intercession. There are ideas that "forever" must be connected to one sacrifice for sins, whereas "others" attach the one sacrifice to "sat down". Westcott argues that the connection with "sat down" watered down the everlasting worth of Christ's sacrifice; it deteriorates the difference with standeth; it is an alien notion of the supposition of the kingly Christ" (Westcott, 1984).

The study deduces that the theological implications of *ephapax* extend beyond its grammatical meaning, shaping the doctrine of soteriology in profound ways. The study infers that the once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice underscores its comprehensive scope, addressing the past,

present, and future sins of the elect. This singularity ensures that Christ's atonement is not confined to a specific historical moment but encompasses all temporal dimensions of sin. For instance, the retrospective application of Christ's sacrifice forgives sins committed before His crucifixion, while its prospective efficacy covers sins yet to be committed.

The basis of Christ being our mediator in the new covenant is His death. the singularity of Christ's sacrifice, as expressed by *ephapax*, underscores the exclusivity of His redemptive work. Unlike the Levitical system, which relied on external rituals and ceremonial observances, Christ's offering achieves what no other sacrifice could: complete and eternal redemption. Horton (2011) and McKnight (2007) argue that this exclusivity highlights the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood, which fulfils the typological patterns of the old covenant and supersedes its shadows. The once-for-all nature of His sacrifice renders the Levitical system obsolete, directing believers instead to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. Jesus' sacrifice and bloodshed brought eternal salvation for its assurances, contrasting the annual, repetitive, and fleeting atonement that was obligatory in the old covenantal structure. the resurrection of Jesus is not declared in Hebrews; his priestly mediation at the heavenly throne undoubtedly infers both resurrection and ascension, and sets the stage for his unceasing atoning ministry of mediation (Heb 7:25; Moffitt 2019).

Christ's Unparalleled Sacrifice for Past, Present, and Future Sins of the Elect

Martin Luther (1909) further clarified that those who might benefit from Christ's priesthood, that all, nonetheless, do not accept him. Only those called to be heirs eternal, the elect, receive the Spirit. Articulating on 1 Pet 2:24-25, John Calvin (1963) once again makes it obvious that by Christ's death, He has saved and restored believers to life, from which it follows that they are so bound to Him that they ought joyfully to look at him as a model. Calvin (1963), and Brown (1961) have revealed that in this context, Christ's death is associated with "many sons" (Heb 2:10), "those who are sanctified" (Heb 2:11) and "the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16), and concluded that Christ died for all of the saved, that is the elect. Building on the work of Calvin, a New Testament theologian, Inyaregh (2024) reasserts the irrevocable nature of salvation for the elect, emphasising that once an individual receives salvation by accepting Christ, their eternal destiny is permanently secured. This assurance remains intact regardless of any future rejection of the faith or engagement in deeply immoral conduct. Further elaborating on the security of the elect, Inyaregh (2024) maintains that all who are spiritually united with Christ through the transformative work of regeneration are eternally anchored in Him. Nothing can sever them from the enduring and unchanging love of God. Having been predestined for eternal glory, their place in heaven is guaranteed.

The whole thrust of the author of Hebrews is the absolute superiority of the blood of Jesus in His new covenant. The new covenant of Jesus is superior to the old. Calvin (1963) revealed that Christ manifested once for all because if He had come a second or third time, there would have been an imperfection in the first sacrifice, which would refute this completeness. It was a once-for-all, eternally perfect sacrifice for sin. The scope of the atonement covers past, present, and future transgressions of believers. The inheritance God provided for the elect

became effective in full force, in the manner of a will, the moment Christ died on the cross and declared, "It is finished". The instrument of death ensures the present reality of our eternal inheritance. God cleansed believers of all their sins and brought about reconciliation to Himself through that sacrifice (Eph. 2:18-19).

On the contrary, Delitzsch (1978) maintains that the writer's pertinent point is that Christ died for all without exception, that is, for every single individual among men. This view poses a danger as it advocates for universal salvation. Universal salvation is not biblical. Looking at the same view from another angle, Origen and Bengel aver that Christ died for every person, excluding God. Bengel discovers a comparable passage in 1Corintians 15:27, where all is submitted to Christ, except God (Cited in MacLeod, 1989).

Cockerill (2012) avers that the author of Hebrews stresses that by his obedient sacrifice, Jesus Christ made the all-sufficient atonement through which the believer's conscience could be fully cleansed. To have a cleansed conscience preordained being unencumbered from the anguish of guilt. This entails the sanctification of the soul.

The reflective application of Christ's sacrifice addresses sins committed before His crucifixion, resolving the theological tension of how individuals in the Old Testament era were reconciled to God before the advent of Christ. Hebrews 9:15 states that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, ensuring that those called may receive the promised eternal inheritance. Nelson (2003) argued that Christ's sacrifice of Himself outshone the Leviticus sacrifices. Christ's atonement retroactively forgives sins committed under the old covenant, gratifying the typological patterns established in the sacrificial system. This retrospective efficacy is rooted in the covenantal continuity between the old and new covenants, as Christ's sacrifice achieves the promises made to Abraham, Moses, and David. By offering Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, Christ ensures that the faith of Old Testament believers is vindicated and their sins are forgiven through His work.

The prospective application of Christ's sacrifice addresses sins yet to be committed, ensuring that the elect, saints are continually covered by His atonement throughout their lives. This forward-looking dimension of Christ's sacrifice is particularly significant for understanding the assurance of salvation, as it guarantees that no sin committed after conversion falls outside the scope of His atonement. Calvin (1963) confirms that the prospective efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is rooted in its covenantal nature, as the new covenant established through His blood is permanent and unbreakable. This enduring efficacy provides believers with unwavering confidence that their sins are fully forgiven and their eternal destiny secured. His sacrifice remains sufficient for all temporal dimensions of sin, addressing both known and unknown transgressions.

The study synthesises that the universal scope of Christ's sacrifice further underscores its unparalleled nature, as it extends beyond the confines of ethnic Israel to encompass all believers. Unlike the Levitical priesthood, which was limited to the nation of Israel, Christ's priesthood is inclusive and universal, breaking down barriers and creating a new community of faith. The sufficiency of Christ's atonement is reflected in its ability to unite diverse peoples under the banner of grace, fostering reconciliation and unity within the body of Christ. This

inclusivity is rooted in the typological precedent of Melchizedek, whose priesthood transcended tribal and national boundaries. By fulfilling this typology, Christ's sacrifice secures forgiveness for all who believe, regardless of ethnicity or social status, demonstrating the boundless scope of His redemptive work.

For the believers, the matter of security before the Lord is forever settled. This is because Christ is forever seated, interceding for them at the right hand of the throne of God. As Edgar Andrews (2003) articulates, believers' spiritual experience may ebb and flow, yet the ageless High Priest remains infinite in His care, compassion, and mercy toward believers. The blood of Christ is the ransom paid to God (Lang, 2020) that dissipates the debt of sin and sets man free from his captivity. Hill (1967), on the other hand, is silent on the subject of ransom; nonetheless, he ascertains freedom from sin as perceptible. The study infers that believers can live with the assurance that the salvation and safety of their souls are eternally established.

Irrevocability of Atonement (Offering of Himself)

The finality of Christ's atonement, as articulated in Hebrews 7:27, is a cornerstone of the theological argument presented in the epistle, underscoring the irrevocable and comprehensive nature of His sacrificial offering. This finality is not merely a historical event but a theological declaration of the sufficiency of Christ's work to resolve humanity's sin problem once and for all. The multifaceted dimensions of this finality reveal that Christ's self-offering accomplishes the redemptive purposes of God and secures eternal redemption for the elect (Luther, 1909; Calvin, 1963; Inyaregh, 2024).

MacDonald (1971) and Morris (1983) agreed that the blood-life sacrifice of Jesus Christ made eternal atonement for sins, impacting the whole being, both externally and internally, redeeming the soul, mind, heart, and body, and making forgiveness of sins an eternally attained, living reality. This is in line with the once and for all blood-life sacrifice of Jesus, signifying that there is no more a sacrifice for sins, because Jesus' blood-life sacrifice is final (Heb 10:18). This piece has shown how the blood-life sacrifice of Jesus made eternal atonement for sins. Guthrie (1983), in the same line of thought, avers that it is God's kindness towards those who don't warrant His kindness.

The blood of Christ is the ransom paid to God; 'ransom' may also refer to money paid for the manumission of slaves (Lang, 2020) that clears the debt of sin and sets man free from his bondage. It has been argued that no view of a ransom price is referred to in Hebrews 9:12; only the thought of deliverance seems predominant (Hill, 1967). The atonement is not simply "a subjective forgiveness in Hebrews; rather, it is an objective transaction" in which Christ paid the price to secure man's deliverance. While the benefits of this transaction are subjectively applicable to Christian believers, the objective aspect of atonement is not overlooked by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (MacLeod, 1989).

The covenantal implications of Christ's self-offering further underline the finality of His atonement, as it establishes a new relationship between God and humanity based on grace rather than law. Hebrews 8:6 describes Christ as the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises, which fulfils and surpasses the old covenant. This new covenant, sealed

by Christ's blood, ensures the permanence and irrevocability of His atonement, securing the eternal redemption of the elect. The exclusivity of Christ's atonement further proves its finality, as His sacrifice renders the Levitical system obsolete and directs believers to the sufficiency of His work. Hebrews 10:18 states that where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any offering for sin, proving the definitive resolution achieved through Christ's offering (Attridge, 1989).

Assurance for Believers (the Elect)

The sufficiency of Christ's sacrificial death, as proclaimed in Hebrews 7:27, serves as a profound source of assurance for believers, grounding their confidence in the unchanging efficacy of His atonement. This assurance is not merely a theological abstraction but a lived reality that permeates the spiritual life of the elect, fostering unwavering trust in God's redemptive promises. This entry, as the one who sacrifices himself, was made once for all time (Heb. 7:27, 9:25, 26c, 28a). Thus, Christ will never be sacrificed again, and His sacrifice is complete, perfect, and final (Hawthorne, 2008). Again, Christ's sacrifice is eschatological, and nothing stands between it and the coming of Christ (Hawthorne, 2008). This portrays the pastoral significance of this assurance, noting how the finality and comprehensiveness of Christ's sacrifice provide believers with a firm foundation for spiritual confidence. By exploring the objective basis of assurance, its subjective experience, and its practical implications, this piece elucidates how Christ's atonement anchors the believer's hope in the certainty of salvation.

At the heart of this assurance is the objective truth of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, which resolves humanity's sin problem definitively and irrevocably. Hebrews 10:14 declares that by one sacrifice Christ has made perfect forever those who are being made holy, underscoring the permanence and sufficiency of His atonement. For Moffitt (2019), Jesus' priestly mediation at the heavenly throne undoubtedly infers both resurrection and ascension, and sets the stage for his unceasing atoning ministry of mediation (Heb 7:25). This objective basis of assurance eliminates any grounds for doubt regarding the completeness of Christ's work. The term *ephapax* (ἐφάπαξ) encapsulates the singularity and finality of His offering, ensuring that no additional sacrifices are necessary and that His benefits are irrevocable. This objective truth provides believers with a theological anchor, enabling them to rest in the certainty that their sins are fully forgiven and their eternal destiny secured. From the foregoing, the objective sufficiency of Christ's atonement serves as a bulwark against the uncertainties of life, offering a steadfast hope that transcends circumstances.

The subjective experience of assurance arises from the believer's appropriation of Christ's finished work through faith. Hebrews 4:16 exhorts believers to approach God's throne of grace with confidence, highlighting the intimate access secured through Christ's sacrifice. Horton (2011) avers that assurance is not merely an intellectual assent to doctrinal truths but a lived reality that shapes the believer's relationship with God. This subjective experience is nurtured through the Holy Spirit, who testifies to the believer's adoption as a child of God (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit's witness, coupled with the objective truth of Christ's atonement, fosters a deep and

abiding sense of peace and security. Packer (2005), by contrast, asserts that this inward assurance is frequently accompanied by a transformed life, wherein believers progressively grow in holiness and obedience as a grateful response to divine grace. The interplay between objective truth and subjective experience stresses the holistic nature of assurance, which encompasses both mind and heart.

The practical implications of assurance are profound, as they shape the believer's daily walk with God and their witness to the world. Confidence in Christ's atonement frees believers from the paralysing effects of guilt and fear, enabling them to live lives marked by gratitude and joy. McKnight (2007) ascertains how the communal dimension of assurance fosters unity and reconciliation within the body of Christ, as believers share in the hope of eternal redemption. As Gathercole (2015) elucidates, the permanence of the new covenant avails the believer's inclusion in God's redemptive plan, fostering confidence that their salvation is not contingent upon their actions but on Christ's finished work. This covenantal assurance eliminates the fear of falling away, as it rests on the immutable promises of God rather than the frailty of human resolve.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Hebrews 7:27, through the term ἐφάπαξ ("once for all"), affirms the singular, sufficient, and irrevocable nature of Christ's sacrifice for the past, present, and future sins of the elect. By integrating historical-critical exegesis with theological reflection, the research clarifies the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical system and its implications for eternal redemption and assurance. The unique contribution of this work lies in its focused exploration of the temporal scope of atonement, a dimension often implied but rarely examined in depth. By tracing the typological connections to Melchizedek and unpacking the covenantal permanence of Christ's offering, the study bridges doctrinal gaps and offers pastoral clarity for believers wrestling with assurance. The study recommends, among other things, that Christ's sacrifice is "once-for-all" (ἐφάπαξ), covering past, present, and future sins. It uses Hebrews 7:27 to teach the assurance and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, thereby alleviating fears of apostasy among the elect by emphasising the irreversible nature of Christ's atonement.

Future research will broaden the theological scope of ἐφάπαξ by comparing its usage across Pauline and Petrine texts to uncover wider New Testament implications. It will also delve into pastoral applications, particularly in addressing spiritual doubt, apostasy, and assurance. Additionally, interdisciplinary insights from psychology and sociology will be integrated to deepen understanding of guilt and forgiveness in light of Christ's eternal atonement.

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