

THE END OF HEBREWS CH 9, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

So, this morning we are going to quickly wrap up Hebrews Ch 9 and then look at the Rapture, Resurrection and Return of Christ. Open with a review of the theme of Hebrews.

In our lesson last week (Ch 9 v 1-22) the question was asked, [Show slide]. Three reasons were given. The first reason: Hebrews 9:16-17; Jesus died so that the new covenant could take effect, to be put into force. For those of us who agree to the terms of the new covenant, in order for us to receive the benefits, Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, had to die.

The second reason: Hebrews 9:22; God's justice had to be satisfied. In His economy forgiveness is very costly. There is no such thing as cheap grace. God's requirement for the forgiveness of sins is that there be a blood payment for those sins. Jesus's death was that payment for us.

The third reason: Romans 5:8; Jesus died for our sins. God's justice demands death as payment for sins. But His mercy makes a provision for there to be a substitute, for another to die in place of the guilty sinner. So, Jesus took our place on the cross. He died so that we might have life.

READ Hebrews 9:23

All of those things in the old covenant that were a part of the Levitical system (tabernacle, priesthood, religious practices) were just copies that reflected heavenly realities.

READ Hebrews 9:24

As our high priest Jesus did not enter the tabernacle or temple and go into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. Rather, He entered into heaven itself and presented His own blood to the Father which He had shed on the cross for us.

READ Hebrews 9:25-26a

His was a better sacrifice because it needed to be done only once. It didn't have to be repeated over and over again. Under the new covenant there is no need to put Jesus back on the cross every time we sin.

READ Hebrews 9:26b

His was a better sacrifice because it removed sin completely. It didn't just cover sin. Jesus's sacrifice "put away sin." He defeated it. His one-time death dealt with the human sin issue. Reference also Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, and 10:10, 1 Peter 3:18.

Well, how come not everyone is saved? Because not everyone accepts God's terms. You and I can only come to Christ on God's terms – believing (faith) that the sacrifice of Jesus was all-sufficient for our sin.

READ Hebrews 9:27

Death is one appointment all of us will keep. I don't know when my appointment is, but God does. It's written down in His divine appointment book. And after I die comes judgment. That's sort of depressing to think about. But the writer of Hebrews closes on a positive note...

READ Hebrews 9:28

When Jesus came the first time He came to save humanity from their fallen condition. His mission was accomplished when He willingly went to the cross and laid down His life. There He made satisfactory payment for our sins. His death provided the only way for us to be saved. It put into force a new and better covenant. It satisfied God's holy requirement for sin. Jesus became our substitute for sin. For those who agree to its terms, God gives them eternal life.

But Jesus's death, important as it was, is NOT the end of the story. The last part of V 28 says that Jesus "will appear a second time." He's coming back. His mission the second time is going to be different than it was the first time. The writer of Hebrews says that when Jesus comes back it will

be to save those of us (believers) “who are eagerly waiting for Him.” It will be the high point of our salvation experience.

This is what I want us to focus on the rest of the time...

I’m going to read a few excerpts from Randy Alcorn’s book “Heaven.” I gave a short biography here. He offers some interesting insights, gives a unique perspective. I found his book very helpful. So here we go...

We start with the **Death of Jesus**. This is what Hebrews Ch 9-10 focus on. Jesus physically died on a Roman cross. His lifeless body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in linen and buried in Joseph’s tomb. The tomb was sealed and guards posted. What happened next?

The Resurrection! Easter Sunday! The angel said, “He is not here, but has risen.” We have an empty tomb. In addition to all the other reasons we discussed as to why Jesus had to die, an important reason was so that Jesus could be resurrected. No death. No resurrection.

Is the resurrection really that big of a deal? Absolutely! The Apostle Paul tells us why it’s so important.

READ 1 Corinthians 15:14-17.

The resurrection is everything! It’s the foundation upon which our faith is built and stands. Paul says in Romans 4:25 that the resurrection is the proof that God accepted the sacrifice of His Son and justified us.

So then, Jesus physically died and then He came back to life. He had a physical bodily resurrection. Quote A, Alcorn p 115 and Quote B, Alcorn p 116. The same body that died on the cross was raised back to life.

After the resurrection, what happened to Jesus? He stayed around for a few weeks, made several appearances to various people, gave the Great Commission and final instructions to His disciples. Then what?

Jesus ascends back to heaven. Luke gives us the details at the end of his gospel and the beginning of Acts. READ Luke 24:49-53; Acts 1:9-11.

We're told that Jesus will come back the same way He left. And we've been looking forward to His return ever since.

[Interlude, the Church Age, 2000+ years goes by]

Has Jesus come back yet? No. Do we believe that He will come back? Yes. Why do we believe that? Because the Bible tells us that He will. Jesus promised that He would (John 14, "I go to prepare a place for you..."). And so we eagerly await His return even today. Q5 gives you an outline of what I'm going to cover – all these are future events. As we go thru this, fill in the letter of the appropriate scriptures.

"Rapture" of the saints. This is the first event on the eschatological calendar. Jesus returns for His church (us, the saints, believers, followers of Jesus). He keeps the promise He made to His original disciples. Paul talks about this in First Thessalonians [Show passage]. In v 13 he says, I want to talk you about what's going to happen to us Christians. A lot of you are grieving over loved ones who died. But we are not without hope. We have something to look forward to. Jesus is coming back to get us. Here's how it's going to happen...

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

Paul refers to this event as "the coming of the Lord," This is NOT the Second Coming. That will be happen later on when Jesus returns with the saints from heaven and comes all the way down to the earth. Here we go up to meet Him in the air. Something very significant happens at the Rapture. Paul describes there being a resurrection of the dead, "the dead in Christ," believers. As with Jesus's resurrection, their's will be a physical bodily resurrection. READ Quote C, Alcorn p 112.

What happens to our bodies when they're resurrected? READ 1 Cor 15:51-52 and Phil 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:2. Our bodies get transformed into imperishable, eternal, glorified bodies. It doesn't matter what form or condition the earthly body is in when Jesus returns (buried or cremated or blown up or disintegrated or vaporized). God will gathers together the

matter, the molecules in whatever form or state they are in and transform them into a new eternal body. I don't know how He is going to do it. I just believe that He will. After all He's God. If He could form man out of the dust of the ground in the original creation, He can certainly do this!

In 1 Cor 15 Paul talks about this "transformation" that will take place when our physical earthly bodies are raised back to life. He uses the analogy of planting a seed. The seed put in the ground dies, decomposes. It then produces new seeds and a new plant. The new plant is similar to the first, but not exactly the same. Likewise the resurrected body once transformed will be similar to the first body but different.

Our old earthly bodies wear down and eventually die. By contrast our new resurrected bodies will never decay. The old body contains a sin nature while the new body is without sin. The old body is prone to sickness and its strength diminishes over time. The new body is raised stronger and is not susceptible to illness. Our earthly body is sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body. READ Quote I, Alcorn p 123. READ Quotes G and H, Alcorn, p 116. Same body, but completely transformed.

Why do we need to have a new resurrected body? Because flesh and blood cannot exist for an eternity in heaven. Only spiritual bodies, perfect, incorruptible and glorious can exist there. A transformation by God Himself MUST take place.

Paul indicates that those who are still alive when Jesus returns will be taken up after the dead in Christ rise. Their bodies don't die but get transformed in mid-flight. So then, at the Rapture the bodies of all the saints of all time are gathered, resurrected, transformed into glorified eternal bodies. They are taken up to heaven where they are reunited with their spirits. READ Quote J, Alcorn p 113.

After the Rapture those left behind on the earth are unbelievers. That's where Rev Ch 6 picks up. Revelation Ch 6-18 describes in detail the terrible 7-yr **Tribulation Period** During this time many unsaved people realize

their lost condition, repent and turn to God. Most of these new saints in the Tribulation get martyred because they won't follow the Antichrist. Revelation describes the judgments of God upon the earth. His purpose for these terrible events is not merely to judge the world but also an attempt to get people to repent.

It's my conviction after having carefully studied Revelation and the teachings of the N.T. that we believers will NOT go thru the Tribulation. I hang my theological hat upon Jesus's promise. READ Revelation 3:10.

During the 7-year Tribulation Period we will be in heaven with Jesus in our resurrected bodies. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus assembles us together and we return with Him to the earth. THAT is the **Second Coming of Christ** and it is mentioned in Revelation 19:11-16. Jesus returns from heaven. He descends down to the Mount of Olives, the same place He ascended from in Acts 1. A final battle, the Battle of Armageddon is waged against the nations, against those who oppose God. The O.T. prophet Zechariah describes the Second Coming of Christ in Zech 14: Then the Lord will go into battle and fight against those nations, just as He fought battles in ancient days. On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which lies to the east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, leaving a great valley. Half the mountain will move northward and the other half southward... on that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half of them to the western sea (Mediterranean)..." (Zech 14:3-4, 8).

So then, in Rev 19 Jesus comes back to the earth and destroys His enemies. Then in Rev 20 He binds Satan and puts him in prison for 1000 years. Then there is the resurrection of the rest of the believers, those who died since the Rapture took place. This is followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where all of us saints gather together and we enjoy a great banquet feast with our Lord. All the believers of all time will be there.

This ushers in the **Millennial Kingdom**. King Jesus ascends to the throne in Jerusalem where He will reign as King of the earth for 1000 years. This is mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6. Those of us who are the resurrected and raptured saints will rule with King Jesus on the earth. We'll have certain duties to perform in His administration that He will assign us. It will be a time of peace and prosperity. At the start of the Millennial Kingdom there are still some humans in their physical bodies on the earth. Most of them are believers who continue to have children.

After the 1000 years is over, Rev 20:7-10, Satan is released from his prison and he goes out and deceives the nations. There is an uprising against Jesus. Armies are formed to fight against King Jesus, a mass revolt, not just a few deceived people. It says, "Their number is like the sands of the sea" (Rev 20:8). Just like the Battle of Armageddon, this battle will be short-lived. Fire comes down from heaven and consumes Jesus's enemies. Satan and all who fell for his deception are destroyed.

Next is **Judgment**. Rev 20 goes on to describe a great white throne judgment. READ Revelation 20:11-12. At this point all unbelievers will be resurrected, raised for final judgment. This final judgment is the "day of judgment" Jesus mentioned (Matt Ch 10-12). This is the final judgment where the Son of Man (Jesus) separates the sheep from the goats (Matt 25). It is what Paul described in his sermon on Mars Hill as "a day He has fixed where He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). It is the day of wrath that God has stored up "when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Rom 2:5). And who is going to be the Judge? Jesus Himself (Rom 2:16).

The great white throne judgment is a judgment for unbelievers. They will be judged for their sins including their rejection of Jesus. Then they'll be sent off to their eternal punishment described as "the lake of fire."

But there will also be a judgment for us believers as well. This is described by Paul in 2 Cor 5 as the "judgment seat of Christ." READ 2 Cor 5:10. We are not going to be judged for our sins. All of our sins have been

dealt with by Jesus at the cross and been forgiven. By grace we have been saved thru faith. We are now clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is where we receive our rewards. Rewards for what? For faithful service to our Lord during our life on earth (1 Cor 3).

In the timeline of events, when does the judgment seat of Christ take place? The Bible doesn't say. We don't know for sure. It could be any time after the Rapture. Rev 4:10 mentions the 24 elders casting their crowns (rewards) before the throne. It really doesn't matter when the judgment seat of Christ takes place. The important thing is that we are with the Lord in our glorified eternal bodies.

Finally, we have the creation of a **New Heaven and a New Earth**. This is mentioned in Revelation 21:1-22:5. There will be a holy city called the New Jerusalem. A river of life will flow thru the middle of the city. READ Revelation 22:1-5. The original creation had a physical earth. The new earth will also be a physical earth.

Close with Alcorn Quotes E and F on page 124.

When I got saved 50+ years ago I responded by faith to what Jesus had done for me on the cross. I asked Him to save me and He did. The theological terms for what happened to me that day are "regeneration" and "justification." By the power of the Holy Spirit my salvation continues on today in a lifelong process called "sanctification." Over time hopefully I grow in my faith and my walk with the Lord becomes deeper. The best part of my salvation is when I receive the inheritance that is being kept for me in heaven. It will be revealed when Jesus returns (1 Peter 1:4) – my resurrected, glorified, eternal body, heavenly rewards, ruling with Jesus on the earth, enjoying His wonderful new and better creation. All the things we talked about today. The next time you are at a Christian funeral and you hear all these scriptures being read talking about the hope of a future resurrection I want you to think about the very real promises that we have to look forward to.

R.A. Torrey Quote D, Alcorn p 112.

Next time we will plunge forward into Hebrews Ch 10, but I felt compelled to share these truths with you this morning. I hope it's helped.