**THE BEST IS YET TO COME!**

Reminder about class party Aug 20th and Cindy teaching next week

*[Show title slide]* We just finished Hebrews Ch 9 and when Robin and I get back from our vacation we’ll resume our study in Hebrews Ch 10. The last few weeks that we have been in Hebrews the focus has been on Jesus’s death and on its significance for us. The writer of Hebrews has a lot to say about that. The last verse in Ch 9 says this: “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.” Jesus is coming back. But His mission the next time is going to be different than it was the first time. When Jesus comes back He will save those of us “who are eagerly waiting for Him.” The way I interpret this verse is that for those of us who are already saved, Jesus’s appearance (His return) is going to be the apex, the high point of our salvation experience. A lot of very exciting things will begin to take place. As Christians there are a lot of things that we can enjoy about being saved right now. But I’m here to tell you – the BEST part of our salvation is yet to come. And so that is what I have entitled our lesson this morning – “The Best Is Yet To Come.”

*[Show Question slide]* What happens when we Christians die? You hear a lot of things said at Christian funerals like “he’s in a better place now,” “they’re in heaven with the Lord now,” “she’s in the arms of Jesus,” “the angels are rejoicing,” “he’s been reunited with his mom,” and so forth. It all sounds good, but what really happens to us when we die? The Bible indicates that we humans are both physical and spiritual beings. READ 2 Corinthians 5:6-8. When we die our physical body remains behind here on earth while our spirit (soul) – our spiritual self – is immediately transported to heaven. While we remain alive, our physical bodies and our spirits are together. But when we die that union is shattered. Our spirit leaves our body and goes to be with Jesus. We Christians fundamentally believe this to be true. However, most Christians think that this is the way it’s going to be from now on – we die and then we exist forever with the Lord in spirit form in a spiritual paradise called Heaven. That’s it. End of story. But that’s not what the Bible teaches. On your handout I have identified six future events that we Christians will experience one day.

By faith – I have no evidence other than what the Bible says – I trust that these things WILL happen. As of today’s date, June 5, 2022 they have not happened. Jesus still has not returned. He promised that He would. He told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them (and us) and that He would return for us to take us to be with Him (John 14:2-3). But 2000+ years later Jesus still has not come for us. We are still waiting. When He finally does return, these chain of events will begin to take place.

*[Show* ***Rapture*** *slide]* We actually started looking at this first event last week and we spent the majority of the time talking about it. We refer to it as the “Rapture of the Saints.” It will occur in conjunction with the Resurrection of the dead in Christ (1 Thess 4:13-17). Paul says that the dead in Christ (God’s saints, Christians who have already died) will rise first. It doesn’t matter what form the body is in. If God could create man originally out of the dust of the ground, He is certainly capable of raising him up in whatever form his body happens to be in. Paul goes on to say that those who are still alive at the time of the Rapture will follow those who have died. We “will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17). Then, In 1 Cor 15:52 Paul says that the “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” *[Show Q1 slide]*

This is a physical resurrection. At the Rapture our bodies will be transformed into imperishable, eternal, glorified bodies. It doesn’t matter what form or condition our earthly bodies are in when Jesus comes back for us. God will gather together the molecular elements in whatever form or state they are in at the time. He will then, by divine power, transform those elements into a brand new eternal body. I don’t know how He is going to do it. I can only imagine what that will even look like. But I believe (based on God’s word) that God will do it. I look at it this way: If God was able to form man out of the dust of the ground in Gen 2:7, then He can certainly do this! “With God all things are possible!” (Matt 19:26)

When all this takes place our physical bodies which had been left behind when we died will be gathered, resurrected, transformed and then taken up to heaven where they are reunited with their spirits. In 1 Cor 15 Paul talks at length about this “transformation” that will take place. We looked at this last week and made a couple of important points. First, the same body that died will get resurrected and transformed – just like what happened with Jesus. Second, if we are going to be able to exist for an eternity with the Lord we need different bodies than what we have now. We will need bodies that are perfect, incorruptible, and eternal. God is the One who will make that become a reality.

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:14 *[Show Q2 slide question only]* In 1 Cor 15:20 Living Letters Paul says, “The fact is that Christ did actually rise from the dead, and has become the first of millions who will come back to life again some day.” *[Show Q2 slide answer].* Was Jesus’s resurrection a physical resurrection? So also will be ours! Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can have confidence in our own bodily resurrection.

*[Show* ***Return*** *slide]* The next event we talked about last week will take place after the 7-year Tribulation period. Jesus will assemble together those of us who were raptured. We will then return to earth with Jesus in our resurrected bodies (Rev 19:11-16). This is sometimes referred to as the “Second Coming of Christ.” This was pointed out by someone in our class last week – technically, this is actually Jesus’ third coming. His first coming was the Christmas story. His second coming is the Rapture (which Paul refers to as the “coming of the Lord” (1 Thess 4:15). This means that His return to earth here with us saints is His third coming. The main point I want to emphasize is that no matter what numbering system you want to assign, the Rapture of 1 Thess 4 and the Return of Jesus with the saints to earth in Rev 19 are different events. The descriptions given in Scripture of them are different.

READ Revelation 19:13-14. So then, when Jesus comes back to the earth He is not alone. *[Show Q3 slide]* V 14 describes those who follow Jesus upon His return as “armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure…were following him on white horses.” So how do we know who these folks are? Who is in heaven dressed in fine white linen? How do we know they are saints and not angels or someone else? V 8 tells us that these are the saints, the Bride of Christ. *[this required you to go read context]*

So Jesus comes all the way down to the earth and stands on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4). Revelation 19:17-21 describe what we know as “the Battle of Armageddon.” *[Show Q4 slide]* Jesus is victorious. He defeats His enemies. It’s a pretty one-sided battle. Again, please take note that this is a physical battle, not merely spiritual warfare.

 Which leads to the third event…

*[Show* ***Marriage*** *slide]* This is the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” or sometimes you will hear it referred to as the “Wedding Supper” or “Wedding Feast of the Lamb.” This is when all of us saints will gather together and we will enjoy a great banquet feast with our Lord. The only description of it comes in Rev 19:6-9 (show passage). Here the invitation to attend this banquet goes out from heaven. When and where it takes place we are not told. It could take place any time between the Rapture of the Saints and the end of the Millennial Kingdom. There are different views of it. I hold to the view that this will be an actual banquet held on the earth with real food – a literal wedding feast and not just a spiritual one. I don’t take everything in the Bible literally. There are often figures of speech being used. But when it comes to the Book of Revelation I take a fairly literal approach to the events that are being shown to John in a vision. I am not one to just spiritualize or allegorize its contents like some people want to do. I guess that is why I like Randy Alcorn and his insights.

*[Show Alcorn slide]* I mentioned last week that one of my sources in preparing this material was Randy Alcorn’s book, “Heaven.” READ Alcorn quote on p 302. Pretty exciting!

*[Show Q5 slide]* If it is to include all the believers of all time (which is my view) then it would need to occur after the resurrection of the Tribulation Period saints in Revelation 20:4.

*[Show* ***Millennial*** *slide]* This takes us to the fourth event and that is the Millennial Kingdom. This is described in Revelation 20:2-*6 [show passage].* Satan is bound for a period of 1000 years. The Tribulation saints – all those who got saved since the Rapture, including many martyrs – they are resurrected and receive their eternal bodies. Now, there are a lot of Christians who do not believe in a literal reign of Christ on the earth. This is the Amillennial viewpoint. As for His reign for 1000 years, a lot of people don’t take that number literally either. But there must be some significance to the 1000 years because it is repeated 6 times in Rev 20.

Rather than give you my opinion I am going to call upon the Old Testament prophets who had a lot to say about the future reign of their coming Messiah, the One we know now to be Jesus. *[Show Q6 slide].* It is clear that from their Jewish mindset, His reign was going to be a physical reign on the earth.

I think those prophets of old were a whole lot smarter than any Bible scholar I know. So I am going to go along with their view. King Jesus will ascend to His throne in Jerusalem where He will reign as King over the earth for 1000 years. Those of us who are the resurrected and raptured saints will rule with Him on the earth. I suppose we will all have certain duties to perform in His administration which He will assign to us. The reign of Jesus will be an extended period of peace and prosperity.

At the start of the Millennial Kingdom there are still some humans in their physical bodies who remain on the earth. Most of these are believers. Being in their physical bodies they will still have children. They will continue to age. And they will eventually die. This continues on for 1000 years or at least for a long time (if you don’t take the 1000 years literally).

After the 1000 years is over, Rev 20:7-10 [Show slide], 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, and it is not just a few deceived people either! 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 will fall from heaven and consume these rebels. Satan and all who will be deceived by him are destroyed.

*[Show* ***Judgment*** *slide].* Does that scare you? If you are a believer it should not. Rev 20 describes the upcoming judgment for unbelievers. READ Revelation 20:11-12. After the 1000-year reign of Christ and Satan’s final defeat, all unbelievers will be resurrected, raised for final judgment. They will be judged for their sins including their rejection of Jesus. After that they will be sent off to their eternal punishment described as “the lake of fire.” This is the “day of judgment” Jesus mentioned (Matt Ch 10-12). 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). *[Show Q7 slide]*

But there will also be a judgment for us believers as well. This is described by Paul in 2 Cor 5:10. READ this passage. 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. What did we do for Christ? What did we do with the resources He entrusted us with? First Corinthians 3 talks about that. *[Show Q8 slide]*

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. It really doesn’t matter when it takes place. The important thing is that we will be with the Lord in our glorified eternal bodies, clothed in the righteousness of Christ with our salvation secure!

*[Show* ***New Heaven*** *slide]* And then 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. [Show Q9 slide] The original creation had a physical earth. The new earth will also be a physical earth.

R.A. Torrey Quote D, Alcorn p 112; 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 that will not grow old and feeble, get sick and die. I won’t have to count calories or take medications; heavenly rewards for service beneficial to the kingdom; ruling with Jesus on earth where I will have responsibilities He has equipped with properly to carry out; enjoying all the wonders of a new and better physical creation. All the things we talked about today and much, much more… far beyond our wildest imaginations.

 The next time you attend a Christian funeral and you hear all those familiar scriptures that speak about the hope of a future resurrection, I want you to contemplate the very real promises that we have to look forward to. *[Show last slide]* My friends do you know, really know that your best days are yet to come?