

Hebrews

Judgment or Salvation?

Hebrews 9:23-28

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Hebrews 9:23-28 (NASB95)

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CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

The author of Hebrews is writing to a Jewish audience that is being persecuted for their new found belief in Christ. It appears that some of them are beginning to wonder if their belief in Jesus was a mistake. When they left Judaism, a religion that they and their ancestors had practiced for thousands of years and converted to Christianity, had they actually only fallen away from the one true God for an imposter?

Thus the letter to the Hebrews. His purpose from the very beginning was to show how Christ (the reality of the Mosaic law and prophets) is so much superior to the Mosaic law and the prophets which were only a foreshadowing or a "copy" of what was to come through Jesus the Messiah. Thus he refers frequently to the old testament, that they knew very well, to show how Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets and brought in a new and much superior new covenant. In our passage this morning, the author, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is going to continue with that theme by reiterating the superiority of Christ and the new covenant over the old covenant to show how that prepares us for the **judgment and salvation** that is to come.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 9:23-28 (NASB95)

²³ Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

Prayer

BODY:

I. The Superiority of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:23 (NASB95)

²³ Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Once again we see the word “**Therefore**” and we have to ask the question "What is it there for?" This is referring back to the previous section, which made the point that forgiveness of sins is **only** possible through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The blood sacrifices of the Old Testament all foreshadowed the supreme sacrifice of the Son of God.

God was so satisfied with what Jesus did that He highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, things in the earth and under the earth. God exalted Him and lifted Him up to the highest place He could lift Him to, His own right hand, because of what He had done, He was so satisfied. God is satisfied with Jesus.

Hebrews 9:24 (NASB95)

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Here is the proof that there has to be a better sacrifice connected with heavenly things. Because Jesus did not go into an earthly Holy of Holies, He went into the presence of God. And He did it for us. **For us!** Isn't it beautiful to realize that when He went in, **we** went in **with** Him? That is because we are in Christ and therefore we entered into the presence of God with Him.

II. The Superiority of Christ's Sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:25-26 (NASB95)

²⁵ nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Unlike the high priest who entered annually into the most holy place, Christ entered into the most holy place once for all time. Unlike the old covenant that was inaugurated by the death of animals that had no choice in the matter, the new covenant was inaugurated by Christ's voluntary death. Unlike the old priesthood that offered the blood of animals, Christ offered his own blood. Unlike the old priesthood that offered sacrifices continually without lasting effect, the blood of Christ obtained eternal redemption.

Jesus is superior to any goat, bull, ram, or sheep, infinitely. If it was necessary that the copy had to have sacrifices, how much more necessary would it be that the reality had to have a sacrifice? Not only just a sacrifice, but better sacrifice. All the blood of the old covenant was nothing but a picture of the shed blood of Jesus. And the death of Jesus Christ is that which satisfies God.

Jesus offered the better sacrifice, first of all, because when it was finished, He entered right into the presence of God and stayed there. Secondly, He never had to do it again. It was the perfect sacrifice.

When Jesus died, it was the end of the ages. Did you know that? There were a lot of ages up to Jesus Christ. There was the age when Satan fell. There was the age when Adam

sinned. There was the age when God saw the wickedness of man and destroyed the earth by flood. There was the age when God spoke at Sinai. There was the age of the prophets and the kings. But the consummation of the ages was Christ at Calvary.

Is it any wonder that the apostles in the New Testament expected Jesus to come any moment? Because once He had arrived the first time, it was the end of the age. The end of the age has been going on for 2,000 years. This is the last age. This is Messiah's age. At the end of the age, by one sacrifice, He put away sin. He did not cover it anymore, did He? **He removed it!**

Because of Christ's superiority we can rest easy in the judgment to come.

III. The Judgment to Come.

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB95)

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

All men have to die, and our death is appointed. That is one appointment that everybody will keep. And immediately after death comes what? **Judgment!**

So this brings up the question "**Will Christians Be Judged?**"

One of the Bible verses that prompts this question is

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (NASB95)

*9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be **recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done**, whether good or bad.*

So the answer, very briefly, is, "Yes, Christians will be judged." You notice the word "therefore". And you ask the question "What is it there for?" Well, Paul had been talking, in chapter 4, about the **struggles** involved in Christian ministry, which he likened to an on-going **death**. Then in the first few verses in chapter 5, Paul expresses his joy at the knowledge that **death** is followed by **heavenly life** in the presence of God. The answer, therefore, is "Yes, Christians will be judged according to our works, as will everybody else."

There are two questions lurking behind that one question "Will Christians be judged?"

The first question has to do with the possibility of condemnation in that judgment. "Might Christians be condemned in that judgment to come?" And, **praise God**, the answer is **NO!**

Romans 8:1 (NASB95)

8 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

On the basis of that one verse alone – and of course the many others like it – we can conclude that while believers will be judged after death we will not be condemned and consigned to hell. As Jesus tells us...

John 6:40 (NASB95)

⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

That is a clear statement of justification at the end for all who look to Christ in faith.

The next question is this: "If salvation is by grace alone, apart from works, then how can believers be rewarded in heaven for our works?"

First we have to understand that the New Testament definitely states that we will be rewarded for our good works. When we say that men and women are unable to please God by their works, we are talking about unsaved sinners who are trying to be justified by their own works. That cannot be done!. But it does not follow that true Christians cannot please God by means of an active faith in Christ. While the unsaved man cannot please God, the saved man can, by faith in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, although our works in this life are never perfect.

Right after assuring us that salvation is **not by works** in Ephesians chapter 2, Paul says this in verse 10...

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Let's read how John described judgment day.

Revelation 20:11-15(NASB95)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

There will be two types of books at judgment. The **book of life** that lists those who are saved and the **many books** that records everyone's deeds whether saved or unsaved.

Paul tells us that this judgment does not determine our salvation for the Christian, which is by faith alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB95)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

So our salvation will already be sure. But, as believers, we will be examined on judgment day on how faithfully we served Christ during our lifetime.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NASB95)

¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay,

straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

We must build on the **foundation of Christ**. What we build upon that foundation can be the “**gold, silver, and precious stones**” of good works in Christ's name, obedience and fruitfulness—dedicated spiritual service to glorify God and build the church. Or what we build on the foundation may be the “**wood, hay and stubble**” of worthless, frivolous, shallow activity with no spiritual value. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal this.

God will examine how faithfully we served Christ; how well we loved and helped those in need, how well we obeyed the Great Commission, how victorious we were over sin, how well we controlled our tongues, etc. Our actions will be tested by fire (or God's judgment).

The gold, silver, and precious stones in the lives of believers will survive God's refining fire and believers will be rewarded based on those good works.

The fire of God's judgment will completely burn up the “wood, hay and stubble” of the words we spoke and things we did which had no eternal value. So then, each of us **will** give an account of himself to God.

The Bible insists that we will be rewarded for good works we do, even though we know they are God's own work in our lives. A clear example is found in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says...

Matthew 6:19-20 (NASB95)

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

In other words, the saying, "You can't take it with you" simply is not true when it comes to Christians. Indeed, we send such treasures ahead of ourselves in the form of good works.

How can this be? How can we get rewards for what is God's work of grace in us? The answer is God's grace in Christ. It is in Christ that our works are received by God with favor and rewarded by His grace.

An excellent example of this is found in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. God there presents the heroes of the faith and you may notice that none of their blemishes and sins that are obvious in the Old Testament are revealed in this chapter. Between the Old Testament record and the New Testament recounting is the shed blood of Jesus, which washes all our sins away and leaves only that which is pleasing to God. Those rewards, no doubt, will be spiritual, consisting of joy and love and other eternal blessings.

God loves us as His own child. He gives us the strength to act, He guides us with His very hand, He puts His Spirit within to give us guide us through this life, and when all that is said and done, He will cry with joy, "Well done, my good and faithful servant! He is the God of love!

"Therefore," Paul says, we make it our goal "**to be pleasing to Him**". It is this future judgment that should motivate us. It is knowing that the condemnation we have deserved will not be inflicted on us that gives us gratitude to please Him.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NASB95)

²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins (what are the next two words?) **of many**, will appear a second time for salvation **without reference to sin**, to those who eagerly await Him.

This is an appointment that all of us will have to meet. We will all die at the appointed time that God has set for us. And after we die we will all face judgment. It is interesting to note that Jesus also only needed to die once. That's all. Why? **Verse 27**: Because "**it is appointed for men**" – how many times to die? – "**to die once**". Jesus was fully man. Thus He also only died once. Jesus does not have to be sacrificed time and time again.

Jesus only had to die once. And He died for us. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Jesus knew no sin but He took on our sin and became sin for us. Judgment demanded death. Jesus died that one death that judgment demanded. And He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. He will come back with the blessings of full salvation. Do you see what a perfect sacrifice He is?

CONCLUSION:

I close with this. Three crosses were prepared by the Romans for three criminals. On two of the crosses, thieves were to hang. On the third cross, was a man guilty of treason against the Roman Empire whose name was Barabbas. But Barabbas never made it to the cross. You see, Barabbas was found guilty by the Romans. But Barabbas never got to the cross. Somebody took Barabbas's place.

And on that middle cross that day hung, not Barabbas but, a sinless, perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ. Barabbas went free but he did not go free because he was innocent, he went free because somebody took his place. And I say to you this morning you can stand at the foot of the cross and you can look up at the cross, and you can say to yourself, "That cross was prepared for me. I deserve to die there. But I go free because somebody else hangs there in my place." And when you have said that, you have understood what Jesus Christ did for you.

What a Day That Will Be!