

# Hebrews

## God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

### Hebrews 13:4

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**CONCLUSION:**

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## God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

### Hebrews 13:4

#### INTRODUCTION:

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

#### **Hebrews 13:4 (NASB95)**

*<sup>4</sup> Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*

#### Prayer

The late comedian, George Burns, used to say that he could remember the time when the air was clean and sex was dirty. Biblically speaking, sex is not dirty when it is a covenant marriage between a man and a woman. God ordained sex in marriage in the very beginning in the Garden of Eden.

That is the correct place for sex. The wrong place is outside a covenant marriage, where it incurs God's judgment.

Perhaps you are wondering why I would spend an entire message on a single verse that is fairly easy to understand. A verse that most churchgoers would agree with. And secondly, what does this verse have anything to do with salvation?

Let me try to explain. I am going to start the message by very briefly commenting on marriage and adultery. But I want it to be a stepping stone to show that, in our world of sin, good and evil exist together. That all mankind has sinned and is in need of a savior. And that God has known of the dilemma that man would encounter since before creation and has put into place a plan of salvation by which man of all ages can be saved.

Over the past 60 years, our culture has taken a U-turn away from the Christian view of marriage and sexual morality that was prevalent before that time. While divorce and sexual immorality are not new, they used to be frowned upon and marital faithfulness was viewed as desirable. But beginning in the 1960's, our culture began to cast off Christian standards and openly embraced "free" sex and easy divorce. Openness toward homosexuality began to make inroads, so that now it is widely promoted as a way of life that should not only **not** be condemned, but be **accepted** as normal.

God created **one woman** for Adam, **not** many women and **not** a man! While God tolerated **polygamy** in the Old Testament, you cannot find a single example of a harmonious polygamous marriage. It always created problems. Also, God tolerates **divorce** under certain conditions.

Homosexuality is uniformly condemned in the Bible as sin.

## **BODY:**

### **I. The Fall of Man.**

We all know the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3. This caused us to be spiritually dead and separated from God.

God was not caught off guard. He knew from the very beginning that it would happen. How do I know? God has a book of life that lists everyone who accepted God's free gift of salvation and remained faithful until the end.

Look at what John tells us about the book of life.

#### **Revelation 3:5 (NASB95)**

<sup>5</sup> He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter heaven. All others will realize their mistake at judgment when it is too late. They **will** worship God but they will be thrown into the lake of fire.

#### **Revelation 13:8 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written **from the foundation of the world** in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

#### **Revelation 21:27 (NASB95)**

<sup>27</sup> and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

### **II. The Old Covenant.**

The Old Covenant was a conditional or bilateral agreement that God made with Abraham and his descendants (the Israelites). This was the covenant:

#### **Genesis 12:1-3 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> Now the Lord said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Beginning with the book of Genesis and following, the Old Testament continuously pointed forward to a Messiah or Savior. God changed course with His chosen people Israel at Mt. Sinai by adding the Law. It had a beginning and an end. It began at Mount Sinai with the Law. The recipients were Moses and the children of Israel. The responsibility was to keep the whole law.

#### **Exodus 19:3-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>3</sup> Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: <sup>4</sup> ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup> Now then, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant**, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

<sup>7</sup> So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. <sup>8</sup> All the people answered together and said, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do!**” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.

Despite their promise to Moses that they would do as God had instructed them, we know that they very quickly turned away from God and were not able to keep the whole law. The penalty for breaking the law caused God to pass judgment upon them.

### **Deuteronomy 28:63-64 (NASB95)**

<sup>63</sup> It shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. <sup>64</sup> Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

You may ask...if God knew they would be unable to keep the whole law, why did He establish it? One of the key passages that explains the purpose of the law is found in [Galatians 2:15 - 3:29](#). Due to time restraints, I would like to read only the final portion of that scripture. You can read the rest of it on your own time.

I want you to notice, first of all, that despite of their sins, God continued to keep His promise to Abraham. That was part of His eternal plan for salvation.

### **Galatians 3:21-29 (NASB95)**

<sup>21</sup> Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. <sup>22</sup> But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Now listen to this carefully! <sup>24</sup> **Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.** <sup>25</sup> **But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. What has Paul just said? We are no longer under the law!** <sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

God kept His promise. That was His eternal plan of salvation from the very beginning!

If the law had been able to provide righteousness, then there would have been no reason for Jesus to die on the cross. **His death would have been in vain!** But the law could not

provide righteousness because man was utterly unable to keep the law. So the law ended when Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law with His death on the cross. Man, in his weakness could not keep even a very small portion of the law, but Christ was able to keep all of it perfectly.

Let's quickly compare the law to the New Covenant. The author of Hebrews details some of the differences between the Old and the New Covenants.

### III. Comparisons Between the Old and New Covenants.

For each of the comparisons I have selected key verses. To get a fuller explanation you should read the many verses surrounding those verses.

#### A. Sacrifices.

The Old Covenant required repeated, daily sacrifices of animals as a reminder of the people's sin. But it was impossible "**for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**".

##### **Hebrews 10:1-4 (NASB95)**

**10** For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. <sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Under the New Covenant, the sacrifice of Jesus ended the need for animal sacrifices once and for all.

##### **Hebrews 10:8-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure *in them*" (which are offered according to the Law), <sup>9</sup> then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." **He takes away the first in order to establish the second.** <sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

So did God change His mind? NO! Since man could not find righteousness by the sacrifice of animals under the law, God **ended** the Old Covenant that He used to let us know we had sinned and replaced it through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ "**once for all**".

#### B. The High Priest.

We have a superior high priest. Under the Old Covenant, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place where God's presence dwelt—and that only once a year. But under the New Covenant, **Jesus** is our High Priest.

##### **Hebrews 7:23-25 (NASB95)**

<sup>23</sup> The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, <sup>24</sup> but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. <sup>25</sup> Therefore He is able also to save

forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

### **C. The Sabbath.**

How about the Sabbath? It was one of the ten commandments that said we are to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. In order to get a full picture of the New Covenant perspective on the Sabbath, one of the key passages is found in Hebrews 4. I am only going to select a few key verses. I would encourage you to read the entire chapter in your own time to get a fuller picture.

#### **Hebrews 4:4-11 (NASB95)**

<sup>4</sup> For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; <sup>5</sup> and again in this *passage*, “They shall not enter My rest.” <sup>6</sup> Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

“Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”

<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. <sup>9</sup> So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup> **For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.** <sup>11</sup> Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

Sabbath rest was instituted as a symbol of the true rest to come in Christ. That is why the Sabbath could be violated by Jesus by working miracles and many other things, Since we know that Jesus led a perfect life and never sinned, keeping the Sabbath day obviously does not pertain to the New Covenant. When the true Rest came, the symbol was useless.

#### **Colossians 2:16-17 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or **a Sabbath day**— <sup>17</sup> things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

So the festivals and the Sabbath day are only "**a mere shadow of what is to come**".

Adam and Eve were completely righteous when they were created. They walked and talked with God as regularly and as naturally as they walked and talked with each other. They were at rest, in its original and its fullest sense. They relied on God for everything. They had no anxieties, no worries, no pain, no frustrations, no heartaches. They did not need God's forgiveness, because they had no sin to be forgiven of. They did not need His consolation, because they were never grieved. They did not need His encouragement, because they never failed. They only needed His fellowship, because they were made for Him. This was their "rest" in God. God completed His perfect work and He rested. They were His perfect work and they rested in Him. Whereas God rested from the work of creation, the believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his works as the Old Covenant directed and now rests in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

So, I guess, one final question remains to be answered. **Why do we worship on the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath on the seventh day?**

We try to pattern our worship after the early church. The New Testament church was established in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the promised Holy Spirit arrived. The day of Pentecost was always on the first day of the week. So the very first gathering of the church was on a Sunday. Scripture reveals that they “**continued steadfastly**” in the same doctrines and practices in which they began.

### **Acts 2:42 (NASB95)**

<sup>42</sup> They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

In Revelation, John refers to the “**Lord's Day**”.

### **Revelation 1:10a (NASB95)**

<sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,

The “**Lord's Day**” is a technical term for the first day of the week. It is so named because Jesus rose from the dead on that day. It was also the day on which the early church met to break bread and make collections.

### **Acts 20:7 (NASB95)**

<sup>7</sup> **On the first day of the week**, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

### **1 Corinthians 16:2 (NASB95)**

<sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

We can rest assured that if the early church met on the first day of the week with the apostles that God was OK with it.

## **D. A Better Covenant.**

We have a better Covenant. The New Covenant is the reality of what the Old Covenant foreshadowed.

### **Hebrews 8:6-7 (NASB95)**

<sup>6</sup> But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

<sup>7</sup> **For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.**

Even while the Old Covenant was in effect, God had already planned the New Covenant. The two work together to show people their need for God and then to fulfill that need. The Old Covenant required people to please God, but no one can measure up to perfection, and the Old Covenant resulted in a string of failures.

That is why during the Last Supper on the night of His arrest, Jesus passed the cup to the disciples and told them of the New Covenant that was to come at His death.

### **Luke 22:19-20 (NASB95)**



<sup>19</sup> And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>20</sup> And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the **new covenant** in My blood.

When Jesus was crucified, His blood provided forgiveness of the sins for the whole world—the basis of the New Covenant. Upon Jesus' death and resurrection, the external regulations gave way to an internal change of heart and by calling this covenant "**new**" he has made the first one "obsolete". How do I know?

### **Hebrews 8:10,13 (NASB95)**

<sup>10</sup> "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people.

<sup>13</sup> When He said, "A new *covenant*," **He has made the first obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

So the question is asked, "Why would you ever want to go back to the law which was only a foreshadow of the reality to come?" If we live by the law we are, in effect, trying to earn salvation by our own works and we will then be judged by the law. That is a very bad place to be in the New Covenant. Christ has offered a free gift of salvation to us through His work on the cross. Why would we ever want to refuse that?

Receiving God's eternal plan of Salvation is now a free gift for any who will believe in Christ and trust that His blood takes away their guilt before God.

### **John 3:16-17 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

## **IV. Transformation From Death to Life.**

So then we have to ask the question, "How do we receive God's salvation in our life?" The simple answer is we must "**be transformed by the renewing of our mind**".

### **Romans 12:1-2 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

But, **oh** how we love our sin! To be saved do I really have to give up adultery, pornography, drunkenness, jealousy, carousing, and the other evident deeds of the flesh that I seem to be infected with? I am not sure I can successfully accomplish that. I have got some pretty bad habits that I cannot seem to escape. How can I eliminate them in my life?

Let me start by saying, "**We do not change our lives to come to Christ. We come to Christ and let him change our life!**". **(Repeat)**

So, how can I eliminate them in my life? Well let us see what the scriptures say.

### **Galatians 5:16-18 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, **(Listen to this!) you are NOT under the Law.**

When you " **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God** " our desire will be that we are "**transformed by the renewing of your mind**" according to the Word of God and avoid conformity to the world that Paul refers to as evident "**deeds of the flesh**".

What are the deeds of the flesh?

### **Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB95)**

<sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality (such as adultery in our text), impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, (Do you take this seriously? You certainly should! Why? It is because...) **that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That is as serious as it gets!**

In order to have a true salvation, we must have a complete transformation in our lives. If we continue to willingly practice the deeds of the flesh then we are not transformed. True transformation will exhibit a new set of values and desires within us when we are led by the Spirit Who dwells within us.

### **Galatians 5:22-24 (NASB95)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The spirit that is within us guides us in our walk with the Lord.

### **Romans 6:3-4 (NASB95)**

<sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, (our death signifies that we have died to our sinful desires) **so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.**

## **CONCLUSION:**

There is so much more we could say. But this is, in a nutshell, God's unfolding of His eternal plan of salvation that He planned for us even before creation! It should help answer several questions that some of you have concerning what God expects from us today under the New Covenant. Will you be found in the Lamb's Book of Life?

## **Family of God**