

# The Harvester



## Preparing Souls

## To Serve The Lord



Volume 35

September 2014

Number 2

## “It Is Appointed Unto Men Once to Die, But After This The Judgment” . . . Or Has This Already Happened?

By Brian R. Kenyon

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: <sup>28</sup>So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. 9:27-28)

These verses conclude a section where the Hebrews writer proves that Christ is the better sacrifice; namely, because (1) He is the substance of the shadow (Heb. 9:23 cf. Heb. 8:4; 9:1; 10:1, 4); (2) He entered heaven itself (Heb. 9:24); (3) He put away sin once and for all time by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:25-26); and (4) He is our salvation (Heb. 9:27-28). This latter point, consisting of verses 27-28, gives both a comparison and a contrast between all humanity and the man, Jesus Christ.

Within its teachings are valuable truths in meeting a strange doctrine that is beginning to make a come back in some parts of our brotherhood. This doctrine alleges that all Bible verses alluding to the “judgment” and/or bodily “resurrection” at the end of time were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70. This doctrine has many sub-doctrines, including dual Mosaic and Gospel covenants, denial of a future bodily resurrection, and even universalism (i.e., everyone will be saved). There is not total agreement among the AD 70 proponents with each of the sub-doctrines, but the fulfillment of all eschatological events in the destruction of Jerusalem is the point upon which they all would agree.

In this study, we will examine the comparisons and contrasts in Hebrews 9:27-28 and note the impossibility of all of these being fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Let the Bible speak for itself!

### First Comparison Physical Death Occurs Only Once

All humans, including Jesus, must face death. It seems that “It is appointed unto men once to die” would need no further explanation, but given the strange doctrine alluded to above, we must first answer the question, “Is the Hebrews writer referring to physical death or to spiritual death?” The word translated “appointed” (from *apokeimai*, ἀπόκειμαι) generally means to be stored away (Lk. 19:20; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:8), but when used impersonally, it refers to one’s lot (Heb. 9:27). Thus, the appointment to death is something that is inescapable. If this death were spiritual, then the verse would be saying that every human being must sin! This cannot be true because there is no sin we must commit, is there? If so, which sin is it? Thus, the answer to the question as to which “death” humans are “appointed” is clearly physical death! That “appointment” to die physically is a result of the first sin in the Garden of Eden. After the LORD God gave each entity involved with sin its consequence, He said,

Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: <sup>23</sup>Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. <sup>24</sup>So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24)

In the midst of that Garden were two trees: the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil, from which they were not to eat, and the tree of life, from which if they ate, they would physically live forever (Gen. 2:8-9, 16-17 cf. Gen. 3:22). However, it is not good for humans to live forever in a state of sin, so the LORD God drove out the first humans. Note the significance of why He placed the Cherubim and the flaming sword—"to keep the way of the tree of life"! That literal tree of life was undoubtedly destroyed in the flood, and because humans have had no more access to it since the close of Genesis 3, it is impossible for them to live forever physically. Thus, "it is appointed unto men once to die."

Seeing that this appointment for all humans to die cannot be referring to spiritual death, is there something in the context that would limit the death here only to those who lived before AD 70? One would think that if the "judgment" in Hebrews 9:27b referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, as the AD 70 proponents claim, then the appointment to die once would be limited to those who lived in and around Jerusalem prior to AD 70. This *is not* what the Bible teaches! The appointment to die as a result of the events in Genesis 3 is *universal*. All human beings, young or old, men or women, die physically (cf. Ps. 90:10). What in the context of Genesis 3 or Hebrews 9 limits the appointment that all must die once only to the AD 70 generation? There is none! "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27a)!

## Second Comparison

### Physical Death Does Not End Human Existence

Although all humans, including Jesus, are appointed to die once, physical death is not the end. Christ was "offered once" upon the cross, but death was not the end for Him. He arose from the dead (Acts 2:29-33), walked upon this earth for "forty days ... speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3-4), and ascended to right hand of God (Acts 1:9-11). All other humans also die, but death is not the end in their

case either. All will rise again to face the Lord in judgment. Jesus Himself said,

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; <sup>27</sup>And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. <sup>28</sup>Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, <sup>29</sup>And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (Jn. 5:26-29)

Paul said,

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. <sup>11</sup>Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. (2 Cor. 5:10-11a)

Just as sure as all humans are appointed once to die, all humans will experience "judgment" after death (discussed in more detail below)! Since humans are still physically dying, there is still a "judgment" in the future!

## First Contrast

### Humans Die Burdened with Sins; Christ Died to Bear Those Sins

Although Jesus Christ shared death with all humanity, there is a huge difference between regularly appointed, one time human death and the death of Christ. All accountable humans other than Jesus deserve physical death because of their spiritual death caused by their own sin. God declared through Ezekiel, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezk. 18:4). Paul made a connection between physical death and sin when he wrote,

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Rom. 8:10-11)

Christ died to save humanity from sin, to "bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28a). Isaiah also confirmed that Christ "hath poured out his soul unto death ... and he bare the sin of many" (Isa. 53:12). All accountable human beings die burdened with sin unless they have appropriated the death of Christ in their lives through the Gospel (cf. Rom. 6:3-4). It is Christ who was "made ... to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21 cf. 1 Pet. 3:18).

## The Harvester

Published Monthly  
Florida School of Preaching  
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## Second Contrast

### Humans Die to Face Judgment; Christ Died to Save Them from Judgment

As noted earlier, all humans, including Jesus, physically die, but for all humans, including Jesus, death is not the end. There is a tremendous contrast seen in the post death activity between all humans and Jesus as described in Hebrews 9:27-28. After death humans face judgment, but after Christ's death, He will save us from judgment. That is, He will deliver His own from the condemnation they deserve due to the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Because of what Christ did on the cross, His return will bring final and complete salvation (Heb. 9:28). Paul put it like this,

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. <sup>15</sup>For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: <sup>17</sup>Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thes. 4:13-17)

Judgment is a threat facing all (cf. Mt. 25:31-46; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15), but for those who appropriate Christ's atoning death, they will receive deliverance (cf. 1 Cor. 15:50-57; Col. 3:1-4).

The once-and-for all finality of Christ's death assures that His return at the end of time will not deal with the problem of sin (as did His first coming cf. Lk. 19:10; Jn. 3:17), but will bring an end to the entire age begun by His death. The AD 70 proponents would contend that Christ's appearing the "second time" is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, but note that the text affirms that when this "second time" appearing happens, it will be "without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28b). While it is true that Christ, in a sense, came in the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:27), His coming at that time was not "without sin unto salvation" as Hebrews 9:27-28 demands. Because the appointment to death is universal for all humans, their rising to face God in judgment is just as universal (cf. Jn. 5:28-29), and since that judgment is universal, the salvation that will come to those who "look" for Him will be for *all* the faithful, not just those who lived in and around Jerusalem in AD 70!

### Conclusion: Do You "Look for Him"?

The Hebrews writer says that only those who "look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto

salvation" (Heb. 9:28b), which, of course, would exclude the AD 70 proponents with which this writer has communicated. They claim they will go straight to heaven at death and that there will be no final resurrection at the end of time. In fact, they say the Bible does not even address anything past the destruction of Jerusalem. Upon what Bible passage, then, can they claim they go to heaven if nothing in the Bible addresses anything past AD 70?

The word translated "look [eagerly wait, NKJ]" (from *apekdechomai*, ἀπεκδέχομαι) means to await expectantly (Rom. 8:23, 25). Consider also this word's use in Philippians 3:20-21a,

For our conversation [citizenship, NKJ] is in heaven; from whence also we look [eagerly wait, NKJ] for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup>Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

It takes some serious redefining of terms to force these verses into an AD 70 fulfillment! Why not just accept the Bible for what it teaches?

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: <sup>28</sup>So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. 9:27-28)



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# PREPARING TO PREACH

Men decide in different stages of life to become preachers: some, like Timothy, are young; some, like Paul, are in the prime of another career; some are in their retirement years. Since the economy took a dive in 2008, the average age of our students has become younger. Generally speaking, young men without families require less financial support (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-34). The age group that has declined consists of men in the prime of secular careers. The reason for this is obvious: it is more difficult for these men to raise the funds they need to support their young families for two years while they train. We have such men now, who have left well compensated secular careers to become Gospel preachers. While some may consider foolish the giving up of a well compensated secular career to become a preacher, Paul said that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). These men, with families to support, need more financial support than unmarried men or men who are in their retirement years. These men are an important asset to the kingdom. When they apply the determination and talents that made them successful in their secular careers to preaching the

Gospel, great things can happen through the Lord. Do you value preaching? Are you able to help these men with a one-time gift or a monthly amount? No amount is too small. These men are worthy and in need of your help! —*Brian*



Front row: Shawn Sullivan, Troy Postlethwait, Taj Williams, Cody Walling, Hiram Kemp, Cameron Lager; Back row: Rico Brown, Federick Hicher, Brian Kenyon, Kenneth Harrison, Forest Antemesaris. **Thanks for Your Support**