

To Achieve His Resurrection From The Dead

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[0 : 00] And continuing our look through the book of Hebrews and Christ's suffering, the theme of Christ's suffering in it, we'll turn to chapter 9.

It's on page 1206 in the Pew Bible. And we'll read from verse 11 through to the end of the chapter. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

[1 : 08] How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.

For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance. Now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died. It never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool, and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you to keep. In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.

[2 : 34] In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. It was necessary then for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the most holy place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world.

But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.

And he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

[3 : 59] As we were preparing ourselves for the coming of Easter, now as we come to Easter Sunday, let's continue one last time to think about why Jesus came to suffer and die and to rise.

This evening we'll see that he came to bear our sin and to secure our salvation. Let's put the resurrection of Jesus into the context of the two big realities that the author of Hebrews presents to us in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 27.

Two great certainties in life. We will die and we will stand before God's judgment seat for our final assessment. Sobering reality.

Maybe we're wondering why on Easter Sunday are we thinking about death and judgment? Don't we come on Easter Sunday to feel a sense of joy and we'll get there.

But we are very aware that when we watch the news, when we live in community, when we're conscious of the persecuted church, that the great enemy of death is ever present.

[5 : 21] And so it's important for us to put the resurrection in the context of our reality. What does the resurrection of Jesus have to do with my death, my judgment?

And the author of the Hebrews and the story of Jesus in the gospel tells us that it has everything to do with those realities. That in uncertain times, in fearful times, we need to know how the resurrection fits in this context.

Because it does. It speaks a word of promise to us. A word of promise beyond fear, beyond despair, beyond death, if we're able to hear it and respond to it in faith.

So I want us to think about two things that the resurrection promises from this little section, Hebrews 9, 27 and 28. First of all, the resurrection promises that your sin can be forgiven.

Verse 27 begins with the idea of destiny. It's my destiny. Destiny is often used of great and exciting things. My destiny to be the hero, to save the day, to take the throne, to achieve some ambition.

[6 : 35] Often destiny in our minds connected with pleasant thoughts. But Hebrews gives us a sense of reality that we are destined for something, that God has appointed something for all of us.

And it's these realities, death and judgment. Now, why is that? If we go back to the very beginning of the Bible, if we go back to the Garden of Eden, you may remember that God said to Adam, you're free to eat from any tree in the garden, but not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When you eat of it, you shall surely die. If, Adam, you turn away from me and my word, if you turn away from my good and loving rules, sin will come and death will come.

That's exactly what happened. Then we find in Romans 6, verse 23, a very similar message. For the wages of sin is death. So when we read of this destiny of death and judgment, we need to recognize this is the effect of sin.

This is the curse of sin. This is not how God made us at first. Death is that enemy intruder, that destroyer that came in because we as people turn from the God of light and life.

[7 : 58] So just as we were thinking this morning, spiritually without Jesus, we find ourselves walking in darkness. And so following death, the Bible says, the author of Hebrews says, following death, there is also judgment.

And again, this reminds us that we're not here by accident. And we're here by the design of God, our creator, who's also our king, who's also our judge. And we're reminded that we will all one day stand before him to give account, give an account of our lives.

So that while we and people that we know may choose to reject or ignore God, to say that to me, God does not exist, it's fine for you to believe, but it's not for me, that doesn't change the fact that we all are subject to our creator God.

God has ultimate authority in our lives, not you and not me. And so we're told here that man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment.

And this is something that we need to know. This is something that people need to know so that we can do something about it. This week, we were taking a short trip and I went to Marks and Spencer's and picked up a packet of sushi.

[9 : 17] And three quarters of the way through eating my sushi, I noticed that it was filled with crab and shellfish. And I discovered in the summer that I have an allergy to crayfish.

So I had a few anxious minutes wondering what was going to happen. Because last summer, after having a lovely crayfish sandwich, I find myself on a beach in Devon coming out in this rash and my lips getting thick and my tongue beginning to go like that.

And I had to move really quickly to the pharmacist in order to get anti-allergy pills to sort me out.

And that crayfish had done something, it was like poison in my body.

Sin is like a poison within us, distorting the image of God in us so that we fail to love God as we should, we fail to love others as we should.

Sin is like a poison that attacks our heart, it causes our heart to shrivel up, to turn in on ourselves rather than going out in love to God, our creator.

[10 : 25] Sin is the poison that ultimately will kill us. And so we need to know that so that we know what to do about it. We need to know where to go for the antidote.

And the answer is the story of Easter. Because just as God appoints death, God appoints judgment, also in mercy and grace, God has appointed a means of rescue.

Just as man is destined to die and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed. There is grace, there is mercy in Jesus' unique death.

Jesus dies as God's Christ, as God's sent one, as God's promised and chosen king. Jesus dies as a perfect and voluntary sacrifice on behalf of his people.

As John the Baptist described him, Jesus comes as the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world. The author of the Hebrews keeps reminding us that Jesus is our great high priest.

[11 : 38] So he represents us before a holy God and he also brings an offering. He brings a sacrifice and that sacrifice is himself. He is the perfect, the once for all sacrifice to take away the sins of many people.

Verse 28, we're reminded Christ was sacrificed. Some people look at the cross and they say, well, Jesus was put to death by Roman soldiers with the help of the Jewish religious leaders and that's true, but behind that, there is the plan, the eternal plan of God, there is the sacrifice of God the Father of his own son, Jesus.

This wasn't an accident. Jesus was no helpless victim. Jesus was going to fulfill the eternal plan of God. And Jesus willingly sacrificed himself, submitting himself to the Father's plan, giving himself for the salvation of his church.

In Jesus' judgment, he bears away, he takes away sin. Nowadays, and we've seen this just in the last couple of days, there are more and more cases of crimes and errors of judgment that are being caught on camera.

That it's now possible to see where people's crimes are being committed. They can be recorded for posterity. Now imagine for a moment, our worst moment, even our darkest thoughts, recorded for posterity, caught on camera, and then revealed to the world.

[13 : 31] That strikes me as the most awful prospect that could ever be imagined. Those things that we are so ashamed of, those things in our past that haunt us, if our faith is in Jesus, Jesus becomes those sins for us.

Jesus, the judge is judged in our place for those things, so that we can be set free of guilt and shame and fear of death and condemnation.

Jesus took our sin and our sorrow. He made them his very own. He bore the burden to Calvary and he suffered and died alone.

Now we have an important question to ask. Why does the resurrection of Jesus matter in all of this? We're thinking again about Jesus' sacrifice, his death on the cross.

Why does the resurrection of Jesus matter? Well, let's think about Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 17, where he says, if Christ is not raised, you are still in your sin.

[14 : 45] Or to put it positively, because Christ has been raised, you are no longer in your sin. So now we can see why the resurrection of Jesus matters to forgiveness.

Jesus' resurrection is the proof that God has accepted his perfect sacrifice. And because that sacrifice has been accepted, our forgiveness is therefore secured.

So we come to Easter Sunday, we come to the resurrection, and we discover here is the promise of salvation that has been kept. God has accepted his own son, Jesus' sacrifice on behalf of sinners.

C.S. Lewis captures it so well in the Chronicles of Narnia, in the line, The Witch and the Wardrobe.

If you don't know the story, it's the story of two brothers and two sisters, and they come into the kingdom of Narnia, and one of them becomes a traitor, Edmund joins the White Witch.

And Edmund, as a traitor, is facing death. And then Aslan, the lion, the hero, the Jesus figure, he agrees to take the place of Edmund.

[16 : 08] And we discover Aslan dying on a stone table. And there is weeping from Edmund's sisters as they watch Aslan, this brave and beautiful lion, die.

But then the stone table cracks. There's no sign of Aslan. It turns out he's alive. And when they meet Aslan, they have the question, how has this thing happened?

And Aslan talks about a deeper magic. And he says, when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack, and death itself would start working backward.

There's Lewis' way of talking about the significance of the resurrection. It's a sign that Jesus was a sinless sacrifice who was accepted, bringing new life in the place of death.

Jesus has faced death. He has faced judgment for us. And he has come through it. And therefore, because of that, we are invited to trust him, to ask him to bear our sin for us.

[17 : 30] Somebody has to stand and give account and pay the price for our sin. The gospel says Jesus is willing to be the one who bears sin for us if we will trust him.

Therefore, Jesus is the one who can turn shame to honor for us. He can turn despair and failure to hope for us. He can turn death to life for us.

And that's the great news of Easter Sunday. I wonder who we can share the amazing news of Easter with this week when we talk about what we've been doing with our weekend.

Can we turn conversation to Easter and the significance of it? But the resurrection doesn't just promise that our sins are forgiven. The resurrection also promises that your salvation will one day be complete.

Look at verse 28 and see how the author introduces the second coming of Jesus. So just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people and he will appear a second time.

[18 : 56] Not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. So here's the second coming of Jesus being introduced by the author. And this is something that Jesus himself taught.

You can read in Matthew 24, this week, a series of parables that Jesus taught. The king or the master who goes to a far country and leaves his servants with work to do and with money to invest or the bridegroom who's coming for the wedding celebration and there's the virgins who are called to be ready.

The emphasis in the second coming is not be working, be serving, be ready because Jesus the king is one day coming back. Notice that it says that Jesus will appear.

It's just a wee reminder to us that Jesus is going to appear in a physical body. Jesus is not simply spirit. He is also physical.

In Acts chapter 1 and verse 11, the disciples are watching Jesus return to the glory of heaven and an angel comes to speak to them, reminding them, this same Jesus you saw go up into the clouds, he'll come back in the same way you've seen him go into heaven.

[20 : 11] In other words, we have this promise that Jesus is going to come back on the clouds with glory and everyone will see him. Easter Sunday, you read in the Gospels, here is our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

He could be touched, he ate, and he drank with his followers. Jesus, our Savior, Jesus, our great high priest, he took on himself a resurrected physical body for now and for all eternity.

So the resurrected Lord Jesus will come back and the author of the Hebrews invites us to think about why. He says not to bear sin, he's not going to come again a second time to make atonement for sin because he's already done that on the cross.

At the second coming, we are told, he will bring salvation. He will bring to completion what he started in his first coming, in his death and in his resurrection.

His return will complete the great plan of salvation. So we enjoy salvation now, but it's not finished until Jesus returns and we are with him.

[21 : 25] Now we are children of God. But then when Jesus comes back, we will have perfect resurrected bodies and we'll live with God and we'll see Jesus face to face in the glory of heaven forever, enjoying the new heaven and the new earth.

Now we are forgiven as Christians. We are not slaves to sin. Sin has no power, no hold on us. But then when Jesus returns, sin will be totally destroyed once and for all.

Now we have eternal life, which is knowing God, which is knowing Jesus, his son. But then we'll have eternal life, knowing and enjoying God, seeing him face to face in that feast that will never end.

Next week, as a church in the evening, we'll share the Lord's Supper together. The Lord's Supper, which is a foretaste. It's like a starter preparing us for the salvation that is still to come.

When we gather at the Lord's table, Jesus is present spiritually to meet us, to bless us, to give us grace, to strengthen us. But our future hope is of a wedding feast where we'll be in the presence of Jesus, where we'll have the joy of living in the love of God, enjoying rich fellowship with God forever.

[22 : 54] And again, why does the resurrection of Jesus matter when we think about our promise of salvation? Again, to use Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 15, at verse 49, he said, just as we have born the likeness of the earthly man, so we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Jesus' reality will be our reality. Jesus' home will be our home. Jesus' joy will be our joy if our faith is in him.

The resurrection of Jesus is the promise of the world our hearts long for, really, because it's the promise of a world beyond tears and pain and suffering and death.

It's a world where we share in the greatest love of all, the love of God. And we enjoy it not just for a while, but for all eternity if we trust in Jesus to forgive our sins and to bring us to God.

There is this promise in the resurrection that our salvation will one day be complete. At the very end of verse 28, it talks about those who are waiting for Jesus.

[24 : 16] It seems like the author of the Hebrews is drawing on the Old Testament and drawing in particular on the Day of Atonement. What would happen on the Day of Atonement would be that the high priest would wash himself, would offer sacrifices for himself, and then would go into the most holy place, into God's presence, bringing a sacrifice in order to secure the forgiveness of sin for the people.

And on the Day of Atonement, as the high priest went into the most holy place, the worshipers would gather around anxiously waiting to find out, will the sacrifice of the high priest be accepted? will our sins be forgiven? Can we continue to enjoy life as the people of God? How did they get the positive answer? The high priest would come out again.

The high priest would return to them. And this is what the author of the Hebrews is saying to us.

The resurrection is Jesus, the high priest, returning to show that that sacrifice to secure forgiveness has been accepted.

To show that God has forgiven our sins. To show that if we trust in Jesus, we can enjoy life with God.

[25 : 42] And so the question for us then is, are we waiting for him? Is he the one that we are placing our trust in? Is he the one who we hope in?

Is our trust for final acceptance from God rooted in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us?