

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 12- Luke 12:35-40

240- Be Ready- Part 3

May 18, 2014

Luke 12:35-40

35 "Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps lit.

36 "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.

37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them.

38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them so*, blessed are those *slaves*.

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

To the Glory of God

There is a tendency in our modern world to think of history as operating in cycles. It is the concept that what has happened before will happen again. And while it is true that the weather and other aspects of life *do* operate in measurable cycles- the way that Jesus talks here in this Passage shows us that human history is linear and *not* cyclical. Now there are certainly cycles *within* history because of the sinfulness of Man- but history itself is linear and it moves relentlessly toward a final destination- which is already pre-determined by God Himself. And the final glorious Reality of all history is the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

Now as we discovered last week- we are told repeatedly in the

Scriptures that the Second Coming is going to happen at a time that we do not expect and at a time that we do not know. And that has plagued mankind for many centuries and causes them to try to figure it out- which always, and in all cases, ends very badly for those who try to predict the Coming of the Lord.

So there are two things that are absolutely true about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to this earth:

1. Christ's Return is *sure*, it is *certain*, it is *guaranteed*, Jesus is absolutely coming back
2. Nobody knows *when* Jesus is coming back

... and so we are left with one incontrovertible conclusion to both of these statements being true- which Jesus talks about here in verse 40:

Be ready!

We are told to be ready and every generation of believers is to be ready. And we also learned that from 2,000 years of Church history- we know that we are to live our lives as though Jesus could come back at any moment. So the Imminent Return of Jesus Christ to this earth is a cardinal Doctrine of Biblical Christianity.

And that is to say there is no way to predict it. There is no way to anticipate it. People will often ask me, *"Do you think the Lord is coming soon?"* And I will say, *"Yes, He is closer to coming now than at any point since He left"* And that's the best I can do.

And when that answer doesn't satisfy them- which it never does- then they ask, *"But Brother Blair- do you think Jesus is coming this year? Do you think He's coming in the next five years or in our lifetime?"* And my answer is always the same. *"Maybe- so be ready because Jesus said that He is coming at an hour that we do not expect."*

You see, dear friends- since Jesus could come at any time- we are told to always "be ready", and every generation for two thousand years since Jesus first said this has lived with the reality of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Now, when the Lord comes there are a number of things that will take place. This imminent reality of His return at an hour we do not know and do not expect launches a sequence of events that bring the

universe and the world to the end of its current condition. Let me just give you a little bit of an overview of that.

When the Lord comes back- there will be a total destruction of the entire universe as we know it. This universe- this time/space continuum- made up of atoms and molecules will be completely destroyed. It will literally "melt with fervent heat" as the Apostle Peter says. So there will be a universe-sized disintegration of everything that is made. In other words- God will "uncreate" the universe and as we know it- and all that God made will simply go out of existence. Another way of understanding this in the Elizabethan language of the King James is that the Heavens and all things that God rolled out like a scroll will be rolled back up.

And that means that the universe as we know it is only temporary. The planets are only temporary, the entire solar system is only temporary, the heavens are only temporary, time is only temporary, the laws of gravity and physics and finance and government- everything that we know in this created universe is only temporary.

And in its place- the inspired and infallible Word of the living God says that God will Sovereignly create a new heaven and a new earth characterized by infinite and eternal righteous perfection- a universe that has no sin or rebellion in it- and that new universe will last forever.

But the destruction of the entire universe- as cataclysmic as that will be- is *not* the main thing or the most important thing that will happen. The main thing that will happen and that which facilitates everything else that will happen when Jesus returns is that *before* the entire universe is destroyed- there will be a final Judgment of the ungodly on this earth. All *unrepentant* sinners will be vanquished before King Jesus and all *repentant* sinners will be gathered together with the Lord.

So the final Event of the Second Coming of Christ is to create a new universe. And that is part of the Lord's Second Coming. And Jesus will not come back the way He came at first. Jesus' first Advent was as the mild Nazarene- with great humility- seeking and saving those who were lost and to preach the Gospel and perform signs and wonders and miracles to attest to His full Divinity and to commission the Apostles to establish His Church and commission all believers to preach the Gospel

to every creature so that all of those whom God has chosen to be saved from before the foundation of the world would be saved.

But when Jesus comes back to this earth- it will be much different. Jesus is coming back this time as King and Master and Sovereign. He is *not* coming back to seek and to save the lost but to rule the world with a rod of iron. He is not coming gentle- but as a mighty Warrior- and conquering King- with fiery Judgment to utterly destroy all wickedness and rebellion against Him by utterly destroying all the wicked and to silence those who rebelled against Him. He comes this time to set up His Kingdom and to finally end the rebellion and all controversy that has occurred on earth since the Fall. Jesus comes back this time to face all unrepentant sinners with His irrepressible Will and to damn those who have refused their entire lives to bow before Him.

And Jesus returns to create the new heaven and the new earth where all the righteous will dwell forever and to cast the wicked into the Lake of Fire. So this is a real big deal and yet we do not know *when* this will occur, and so in this Passage- Jesus says things like:

35 Be dressed in readiness, and *keep* your lamps lit.

36 "Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open *the door* to him when he comes and knocks.

37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes...

38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them so*, blessed are those *slaves*.

39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

40 "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

So there is a hugely important and cataclysmic event that is sure and certain to come that is going to change everything, and yet we have no idea when it's going to happen. And every single generation of believers since Jesus first promised this- have lived in the light of this, and today we still don't know when it's going to happen. And that's what our Lord is talking about in verse 40.

You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.

... which is placing me in a position where I am almost thinking that it is wrong to try to ignore or circumvent this Divine Command to "be ready" and to go ahead and try to figure out when Jesus is coming back. You have to understand that the reason why we don't know when Jesus is coming back- is not because we are stupid or blind to events- we don't know precisely because God doesn't want us to know. It is not God's Will for us to know.

And so if God Almighty doesn't want to tell us- why all the fuss by believers to try to figure it out? Let us be content to know what God has chosen to reveal to us, and let us be content with trusting that He is Good and Right to *not* reveal everything to us, and so let us spend more time getting ready than we do in trying to figure it all out.

And that is not me being flippant about this and that is not me not caring- that is simply me trying my best to be obedient to the Red Letter Words of my Savior right here.

But let me come at you from another perspective. Suppose we start spending one day every week trying to search the Scriptures for Signs of the Return of Jesus, and then scouring the newspapers and the Internet for the *fulfillment* of those Signs. What will we achieve by doing that? Will we uncover some secret formula for figuring it out? No. Will we discover a secret code that God had the writers of Scripture put into the Bible that nobody else has ever found? No. We will not come one iota closer to figuring out what God already said He doesn't want us to know. So will we accomplish *anything* at all by doing that? Yes.

By ignoring what Jesus said right here and by looking for some secret formula or some secret code that will give us insight- we will be following the ancient heresy of Gnosticism- which taught that the Words of Scripture don't really mean anything at all- but that God put secret codes within the Bible- that only the few "knowing ones"- could find and learn.

So I do not believe in secret codes or formulas in the Bible. I believe and I teach that every single Word of the Bible is inspired and is, therefore, true and is exactly what God intended for us to know and have. There is no such thing as a hidden meaning *within* the Words of

Scripture. The Scriptures mean exactly what they say- and nothing more.

I also do not believe that you have to be a mathematician or have a PhD in physics or geology or astronomy to understand the Word of God. So while it is true that there are very deep and profound elements of the Word of God- I ascribe to the "Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture"- which is just a "three dollar term" that says that the basic meaning of the Bible is so clear that a child can understand it. An uneducated, illiterate farmer living 1700 years ago could understand the basic message of the Bible and be saved and know and love Jesus in a deep and profound way and turn away from sin and live a godly life and go to Heaven when he died- and so can we.

So I don't believe that you have to go through the gyrations of taking the number of planets in the solar system and divide them by the number of the Apostles, and then multiply that by the number of the Kings of Israel in order to try to understand when Jesus is coming back- and I might as well go ahead and say this- I also do not believe that the latest interest in "blood moons" by the most very reverend John Hagee will give us any more information than we already have in Scripture about Christ's Return. I will tell you that John Hagee should have remained married to his first wife and he should have never committed adultery with his current wife and I could trust what he says a little bit more. But Jesus- a Man Whom I do trust, said this about His Second Coming,

You too be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

So we have no idea when all this begins and neither does anybody else, and because that is true- we need to be ready. And we need to be ready for either our own death or the Second Coming of Jesus- because *both* of those events are sure and *both* of them are certain, and yet we don't know when either one of them is going to happen. So we need to be ready and we can't afford to waste a single second of a single day.

Now there are a thousand things I could say about what will happen when the Lord comes back. Everybody always wants to know about the Temple being rebuilt and the 666 mark on the back of the hand or on the forehead and the four horses of the Apocalypse and who the anti-christ is and about the red heifer that the unsaved Levitical

priests will use in their sacrifices. But let me just zero in on one thing- a single thing that I find to be infinitely more important than any of that and to see this one thing- please turn with me to read just two verses from **Hebrews 9**:

Hebrews 9:27&28

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.

So here we see the connection between our death and Christ's return to this earth. The writer of **Hebrews** says here that it is appointed for us to die and then we will stand to be judged by God. But that is not all- Jesus has also died- bearing our sins so that when He returns- He will bring us the *finality* of our Salvation with Him- which is what will allow us to pass *through* that Judgment into eternal Joy. So part of the reason why Jesus is coming back is to allow those who are saved to go through the Judgment of God without any reference to their sin. And that should be of great interest to those of us who are sinners. Now I want you to notice the structure of just *how* the writer of **Hebrews** says this:

27 "Inasmuch as it is appointed for men . . .

28 So Christ also . . ."

So the writer of **Hebrews** is making a comparison between something we do- which is die and later come into Divine Judgment- and something that Christ does- die and later come to save us *from* that Divine Judgment. So you can see that in one sense- there is a parallel between *our* experience and Christ's.

So from this we can say that in this sense- for every decisive experience that *we* have (like dying and facing God in Judgment), the Son of God has a *corresponding* experience. But the huge difference is that Jesus' experiences are not merely alongside ours or similar to them, but that His experiences have a *decisive impact* on our experiences. So in reality- Jesus' Death and our death are *not* parallel.

The Death of Jesus utterly *transforms* our death when He comes back the second time.

So our arrival at the Judgment of God and His arrival at the Judgment are not the same. His arrival- His Second Coming *rescues* us. In other words- the parallel between our life and Christ's Life is designed to show how utterly dependent on Him we really are at every point of our lives- up to and including at His Second Coming and just how great He is. So Jesus is the strong and saving One and we are the weak and desperate ones.

So it's not accurate to merely say that we run the race and Jesus runs the race or that just as we will cross the river- Jesus will also cross the river, or just as we will face the dragon- Jesus will face the dragon. No, it's not like that.

We have to cross the river at death, yes. And Jesus did, too. But Jesus died crossing the river differently than we do. Jesus crossed the river of death to build a bridge for us so we could cross the river. And so we have to face the dragon at the end- yes. And Jesus faced it, too- only Jesus will save us from the fiery breath of the dragon and bring us into the joy of eternal life.

So the point of these two verses is to get us to think of the big issues of our lives, like Death and Judgment and Christ's Second Coming, and then to help us see that Jesus Christ has gone before us in all of these experiences. And that His experience of them is so much *greater* than ours- so that when we have to walk through Death and Judgment- those experiences will be radically different *because* of Christ.

And the point here is to magnify Christ- and by that magnifying of Jesus- to unleash confident and courageous Christians in the world for His Glory. So let's look at these things one at a time as they come in these verses of Scripture.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die . . ."

Now this is a rich sentence. God has been very merciful to say this to us. Listen to two things God means for us to hear in this word.

1. All of us have an appointment with death. "It is appointed for men to

die." But who made this appointment with death? I surely didn't. I make some appointments that I don't like to make- like with the dentist or with the car mechanic. But I would never make this appointment if it were up to me. So who made this appointment for me?

The answer is, God made it. When Adam and Eve sinned- human death entered the world. And God appointed the curse of death for every one of their ancestors. **Romans 5:12** gives us the background. It says,

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

And that is why people die- not specifically their *own* sin- but that all have sinned in the sense that all are from Adam and he sinned, and so that "Original Sin" of Adam is passed through to every human born after that- so that all human beings conceived after the Fall are sinners from the womb. And that is why babies die and that is why unborn babies die- not their own sin- but the Original Sin of Adam. And so death comes by way of sin.

And God had warned this is what would happen and then God brought it to pass. So death is not an appointment that comes to us only by natural processes. That would be far from the Biblical view. As if the world just runs on its own laws without God's daily Oversight and Guidance. No, our appointment with death comes not merely by natural processes but as a Divinely appointed Moment. God ordains our birthday- who our parents are and the color of our eyes and the characteristics that make us who we are and God ordains our death day- when and how. **Psalms 139:16** puts it like this:

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.

So a certain number of days are ordained for me by God and then my days are over. And God sets this appointment with death- the time of my death and the manner in which I die- not Satan- and not my car wreck and not cancer and not my family's history of heart trouble. We have to remember that Satan is not sovereign- God is Sovereign- and

because that is true- cancer is not Sovereign either- God is; heart disease and car wrecks are not Sovereign- God is

But not only that, not only does God set this appointment with death- but God sees to it that we will keep this appointment. He plans it and then He brings it to pass. You recall what Job said, when his children were killed by the collapse of their home,

Job 1:21

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.

So the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, and so the Lord makes the appointment with death and does not share that appointment day with me in advance- just as He doesn't share His Second Coming with me in advance. And the Lord sees to it that we keep that appointment with death just as He sees to it that He will return just at the right time. And let me interrupt what I am saying by telling you this. I am not talking about an absurd, meaningless fatalism here. If what you get out of what I just said that it doesn't matter what you do or how you live your lives- you didn't hear this correctly.

The Holy Bible says that every area of my life is governed by an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God- no matter what it looks like to us. And, therefore- because that is true- we are to live our lives- everyday- to God's Glory- joyfully and humbly submitting ourselves to the Authority of Scripture in every area of our lives- and pouring out of our souls to other people- that which God has graciously poured into us.

So the true understanding of the Sovereignty of God does make us fatalists to the point where we just give up- no it propels us to do great and mighty works for God with fearless joy- precisely we know that our days are all in God's Hands. So God makes our appointment with death in His Sovereign Planning of all things.

Now you remember how Jesus spoke to the Apostle Peter in **John 21:19** that the day was coming (the appointment was made) when Peter would be crucified like Jesus. And a few minutes later Jesus turned around and spoke to Peter about the Apostle John and said,

John 21:22

... If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!"

In other words Christ Himself decides when and how His servants will die. Several years later- Jesus said this to John:

The Revelation 6:11

And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

So Henry Martyn, the young missionary to Persia, was right to say back in 1807,

"If [Christ] has work for me to do, then I cannot die." (Journal and Letters, New York: Protestant Episcopal Society for the promotion of Evangelical Knowledge, 1851, p. 460).

In other words- we are invincible- we cannot die- until God is finished with us, and when God is finished with us- then it is impossible to keep us past that appointed moment. In the same way- it is impossible for us to guess or predict when Jesus will return, but when He gets here- we will see that it was exactly as He said it would be and will be on the Day that God intended.

So it is appointed to us all to die. And we may rest assured, it is not man or Satan or fate or disease that makes that final, ultimate choice. It is Christ Himself- our Creator and King.

2. "It is appointed for men to die once." But there is another key word in **Hebrews 9:27** besides the word "appointed," namely the word "once." This means that you can stop dreaming right now about reincarnation. We are not coming back to die again. We are not coming back in any form at all. The point of the word "once" here is to stress the *finality* of physical death. We die one time only. And that is the end of our experience of earthly dying.

And the knowledge that God has set an appointment for the time and manner of our deaths and then will see to it that we will make that appointment should have the same profound effect on us that it did on the Anglican Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1777, who said:

"Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully" (Boswell's Life of Johnson, Sept. 19, 1777).

So because we are dust and because our time on earth is limited- whether it be by death or Christ's Return- we should heed the counsel of Dr. Johnson and "concentrate our minds" on Jesus and His Cause. 1500 years before Jesus was born- Moses put it like this in **Psalm 90:12**,

"So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom."

... and Jesus said it like this in **Luke 12:40**,

Be Ready!

So we are to "Be Ready" for His Return so that we will be eagerly awaiting Him when He comes back, and when He comes- He will find us busy and fruitful and faithful or we are to "Be Ready" to die- so that we may live our lives in fearless abandon to God's Glory and expend the time we have in the Cause of Jesus Christ and then die well- to God's Glory. It is six of one and half-dozen of the other- either way- Don't waste your life!

Now surely the writer of **Hebrews** wants us to hear this word of the Lord in verse 27 and be wakened from the usual numbness and sleepiness of our lives. Most people think very little about what matters most and think very much about what matters little. The Bible is God's gift to us to keep us from that foolishness and to make us wise.

And wise people are people who have proportion in their lives. They are concerned most with what matters most and what matters least they are least concerned with. And death is huge and death is sure. And like Christ's Second Coming- Death is an event that is certain and sure and yet it will come at a time that we do not know beforehand. So God is calling us here to think about both our own death and the Coming of the Lord, and get serious about both of them in a way that fits with how momentous our own death and Christ's Return really is.

Now the next phrase is what gives death its greatest seriousness. **Hebrews 9:27** says:

It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.

... so death is *not* the end of our existence. That is what is so awesome about it. We are not mere material beings that simply go out of consciousness and decompose into the ground. This Word from God stands over against the common evolutionary idea expressed, for example, by William Provine, the historian of science at Cornell University. He says that evolution

“... finds no intelligent design operating in nature and no such thing as immortality or life after death.”

According to Provine:

“... we are produced by a process that gives not a care about us” (First Things, February, 1997, p. 32).

Now actually Provine didn't use the word “care” in this writing. I put that in there. He used the “d” word. And the word “damn” is a very important word in this connection- just not the way Provine thinks. So when **Hebrews 9:27** says, “**After death comes judgement,**” that is exactly what it means. God does give damnation after death. And it is the most terrifying prospect in the universe- that we might be met after death with a holy and angry and omnipotent God- holding us accountable for whether we trusted Him and worshipped Him and followed His Ways in this life. That is a fearful prospect and that is why this statement is made about His Second Coming in **The Revelation 6:15-17**:

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

And the **Epistle to the Hebrews** does not leave us in the dark about what this means. For example in **Hebrews 10:27** it says,

but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

And then three verses later it says,

Hebrews 10:30

For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

So when our text says that we have an appointment with death and after death we have an appointment with judgment, or when the Bible says that Jesus is coming back at an appointed hour that only God knows about- it means that it will be terrifying and a furious fire and a great act of divine vengeance even on those who claim to be part of God's people, but are only external Christians. And these are sobering realities. So may God use them to wake us up and make us alive to what really matters in this world! Now **Hebrews 9:27** says:

... It is appointed to us to die once and after that comes judgment.

... but what about Jesus? And how does this connect to His Second Coming? Look again at **Hebrews 9:28**:

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.

Now all that I said before trouble us greatly but now notice for our great encouragement here how Jesus joins us in both death and judgment. So there is a parallel- He dies like we do and He comes to the Judgement like we do. But the difference is infinite. Let's see how. Verse 28 says that Jesus Death is:

"a one-time Offering to bear the sins of many."

.. and we will see who the "**many**" are at the end of the verse. But the main thing now is to see that the Death of Jesus "bears" sins. And this is the very heart of Christianity, and it is the very heart of the Gospel, and it is the very heart of God's great Work of Redemption in the world.

So when Jesus died- He "bore" sins. In other words- Jesus took sins that were *not* His Own. Jesus was Personally sinless- but He suffered for the transgressions that others had done. And He did this in accord with God's Will so that the others could be free from God's Wrath against their sins. And as frightening as the other news is- this is the greatest and the best "Good News" in the world! Now **Hebrews 9:26** says:

Hebrews 9:26b

... He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

So verse 28 says that Jesus "**bore the sins of many,**" and verse 26 says that the effect of this is that Jesus "**put away sin.**"

And this is the answer to the greatest problem in your life- even if you don't think it is the greatest problem or not. There is an answer to how we can get right with God in spite of being sinners. And the answer is that Christ's death is "**an offering to bear the sins of many.**" Jesus Christ lifted our sins and carried them to the Cross and died the death that you and I deserved to die. So what does this mean for *my* dying?

"It is appointed [to us] once to die."

... which means that as a believer- our death is no longer *punitive*. Our death is no longer a punishment for sin. Our sin has been "borne". Our sin has been "put away" by the Death of Jesus Christ. Christ took our punishment- not so we could then live unto ourselves- but so that by taking away our Divine Punishment- we could then live with fearless abandon for Him! Okay, Brother Blair- if that is true- then why then do we die at all?

Because God wills that death remain in the world- *even among His own children*- as an abiding testimony to the extreme horror of sin. You see, in our dying- we still manifest the external effects of sin in the world. But the inner relation of sin to God has been radically changed. So the death of God's children is not Wrath against them like it is with the unbeliever- which is why the Apostle Paul said this in **1 Corinthians 15:55-57**:

55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

... and then in the very next verse- Paul gave us the reason why our deliverance from the punitive penalty of sin is such Good News:

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

So because that is true, because Jesus has bore our sins and carried them away, and because it is true that God is no longer angry with me, and because it is true that I have been delivered from God's Wrath against my sins- therefore- I am now free- not to sit on my laurels and do my own thing and live life as I see fit- I am now free to:

... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

In other words, the sting of our own death is removed because the Death of Jesus Christ satisfied the Law's demand and set us free from condemnation and set us free to love and serve God with delight. And therefore death becomes an entrance into eternal Salvation and not condemnation! And that is what the next phrase means in **Hebrews 9:28**:

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.

So there are two great Truths here. One is that the First Coming of Jesus and His offering Himself to bear the sins of many was completely sufficient. He does not have to do any more to pay the price for sin or to remove the guilt of sin. This is why it says here

... without reference to sin...

Jesus came the first time to deal with sin. He put away sin. It is finished. And this is the absolute Wonder of the Gospel! Your guilt is already removed. That much of the end-time Salvation is past and done. "Once for all at the end of the ages" this great Salvation happened. And it cannot be improved on.

But there is more. This is the second great Truth. First we had to face the issue of death, and so Christ faced death and bore the guilt and punishment of it for us. And secondly- we must face Divine Judgment. And so Jesus Christ comes back *a second time*- and just like His First Coming was for us- His Second Coming is for us, too- Jesus is returning for us- only this time when He comes back- it is not to deal with sin- but to rescue us from Judgment. And that's what it means in verse 28 when it says,

[Christ] **will appear a second time for salvation...**

So this is not an *addition* to the Salvation that the Death of Christ purchased- but the Second Coming is an *application* of the Salvation that Christ already purchased in His First Coming. This is what Christ bought in His death. In other words Christ died to bear our sin and to free us from Divine Condemnation, and the application of this is the asbestos shield He gives us in the "**fury of fire which will consume the adversaries**" (Hebrews 10:27; see Thessalonians 1:7 and Thessalonians 1:10).

And this is exactly what Paul said over in **Romans 5:9-10**:

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

So it is the past Death of God's Son for us during His First Coming that guarantees His future Salvation of us from the Wrath of God at the Judgment at His Second Coming.

Now, finally, the utterly crucial personal question: who are the "many" in **Hebrews 9:28a**

"Having been offered once to bear the sins of many . . ."

... because this Good News is only for those who the writer of Hebrews calls "the many". So who are these people? For whom is Jesus bringing Salvation at His Second Coming? And the answer is given at the end of verse 28. He is coming for those

"who eagerly await him."

... and the word that was translated here as "eagerly" is the very same root word as the English word "faithfully". So if you ask right now, and you should ask this-

"What must I do so that I may know that my sins are taken away by the Blood of Jesus, and that, when He comes back- He will shield me from the Wrath of God and bring me into eternal life?"

... if you ask that right now- the answer is this:

Trust in Jesus in such a way that makes you eager for Him to come back

... and I suggest to you that that is what Jesus meant when He said,

"Be Ready"

... so being ready for either death or the Second Coming of Jesus is not about being brave or strong in a human way of thinking. It is about trusting in Jesus to the point where you lose the desire (and eventually the ability) to trust in anything else- including yourself.

The Bible says that Jesus is coming to save those who are *"eagerly waiting for Him"* from the Wrath of God. And Jesus said in **Luke 12:40** to **"Be Ready"**. So how do you get ready? How do you experience the forgiveness of God in Christ and prepare to meet Him either in your own death at an appointed hour or at His Second Coming which is also at an appointed hour? You do that by trusting Jesus in such a way that makes you *eager* for Him to come back and that makes you *faithful* before He comes back.

And this eager expectation for Christ is simply a sign that we love

Him and that we believe in Him *authentically*. You see, there is a phony faith that wants only escape from hell- but has no desire for Christ Himself. And *that* kind of "faith" does not save anyone because it does not produce an eager expectation for Christ to come or a faithfulness to obey and serve Him *before* He comes. That kind of phony faith would rather that Jesus not come back for as long as possible so that it can have as much of this world as possible.

But the faith that really holds on to Christ as Treasure and a Hope and a Joy that not only eagerly awaits His Return but operates in faithful service to Him before He comes- is the faith that makes us to be the "many" that Jesus is returning to rescue. And that is the faith that saves.

So I urge you today to turn away from the world and away from sin and to Jesus Christ. Take Him not just as your fire insurance policy, but as your eagerly awaited Bridegroom and the One to Whom you devote yourself to for as many days as you might have left before you go to meet Him or He returns in Glory!

Amen. Let's pray