

JESUS CHRIST - OUR GLORIOUS HOPE!

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: **28** 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.

The Easter season is approaching. It's a unique event in the world's faiths because Christianity is the only religion whose Founder, - Jesus Christ, - has broken free from the constraints of death. ... Mohammed is entombed in Medina. The remains of the founder of the Baha'i faith lie in a shrine near Acre, northern Israel. Following his cremation, Buddha's ashes were scattered in Kushinagar, India. Confucius is buried in his home town in the Sandong Province of China. Krishna is buried in Gujarat, India. In Judaism, the remains of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, are buried in Hebron ... and it is not known where on Mount Nebo Moses was buried ... They all *died* ... but you can visit Jerusalem and search every inch of the city, and across the whole land and you will not find where Jesus is buried, and that is because *He is not dead!* ... The Christian Gospel is unique because its Founder is alive today. We have no grave to honour and no cemetery to visit because Jesus defeated death and He rose again! *Jesus Christ is alive today!*

And so, Christianity is exclusively a living testimony to the risen Saviour and Lord, and that's how our Gospel is never out-of-date, - we serve a living Lord!

How would you like to have lived as long as some of the people in the early Old Testament? Methuselah, for example, lived an incredible 969 years ... but at the end of it, he had to die for we all know, - and Scripture repeats it, - **Heb. 9:27** *it is appointed unto men once to die.* ... The Colonel (Hugh Nimmo) was probably the oldest person most of us knew, - he was just two months off his 106th birthday before *he died.* ... It does not matter how long you live, you have to die for *it is appointed unto men once to die.* ... Physically, we are only born *once*, and we'll only have to die *once*, as Heb. 9:27 says, you live once, you die once, and you will be judged once ... no 'second chance' to do it all over again.

When Jesus took on flesh, **Phil. 2:8** *he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,* - Jesus died for that is inherent in being human ... and Jesus was a real, genuine, authentic human being, so He *had* to die, **Heb. 9:28** *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many* ... He died, but He rose again. Let's develop how His death and resurrection are a fundamental foundation of our faith, in relation to three appearances taught concerning the Lord Jesus in Hebrews chapter nine.

Firstly, **Heb. 9:26** For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but *now once* in the end of the world *hath he appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ... The writer is referring to the times in which He lived which was also considered by the early Christians to be imminently leading up to the ‘end of the world’. Therefore, he is referring to the first appearance of the Lord Jesus when He came to this earth as a little baby, the son of Mary, and lived most of His life in Nazareth as a carpenter. The Saviour dwelt quietly among His neighbours and townsfolk until He began to openly teach and preach, attracting great multitudes to flock to Him. People travelled from far and wide, - rich and poor, healthy and sick, old and young, some steeped in religion, others not. There was another group who followed Him, and they tried as hard as they could to condemn and disparage everything about Him. They hated Him because He didn’t fit into their religious mould. They tried to hinder Him on every occasion. On one occasion, they took Him to the top of a hill intending to stone Him, but failed. They persisted in their acrimonious crusade until eventually they had Him arrested. They threw Him into a jail. They hauled Him in front of their ‘kangaroo courts’ and undermined the law they claimed to be defending. They humiliated Jesus beyond compare. The pain they inflicted on Him, and the insults they fired were unprecedented. They beat Him, spat on Him, mocked Him, crucified Him ... and *they killed Him!* ... But death could not hold Him, and on the third day He arose from the dead and He met His disciples and said to one of them, **Jn. 20:27** *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side* ... He wasn’t an apparition nor a ghost, but the Man of Galilee, the Son of God, Jesus Christ! ... That was during His first appearance, - two thousand years ago, - when *he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. ... That was His goal, - to complete the work of our salvation.

His second appearance is spoken of in **Heb. 9:24** For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands [*e.g. an earthly temple*], which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, *now to appear* in the presence of God for us. When Jesus ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives He entered His Father’s presence again ... **Heb. 1:3** when he had by himself purged our sins, [*He*] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ... The Gospel of Mark tells us, **Mk. 16:19** after the Lord had spoken unto them [*His disciples*], he was received up [*ἀναλαμβάνω, taken up*] into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. ... The Gospel of Luke says it too, **Lk. 24:51** it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up [*ἀναφέρω*] into heaven. ...

In his epistle, Peter – one of the disciples on the Mount of Olives who witnessed Him going up into Heaven, - wrote, **1 Peter 3:21** the resurrection of Jesus Christ: **22** Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ... as David had prophesied in the Old Testament, **Ps. 110:1** The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand ... And the writer to the Hebrews, **Heb. 12:2** ... Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That is where Jesus is at this moment ... seated on the throne in Heaven ... as the first Christian martyr Stephen testified, **Acts 7:55** he ... looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God ... And John witnessed His enthronement, **Rev. 5:6** I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four [creatures], and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain ... ⁷ And he ... took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. ... At this very moment, Jesus is in Heaven.

What does He look like in Heaven? ... When we die, we leave our earthly body behind, and our soul enters Heaven ... What about Jesus, though? Does He have a body in Heaven? Absolutely, because His body was resurrected from the tomb. That's how, when He met His disciples, they knew Him, as did the 500 witnesses mentioned in I Cor. 15:4-6 ... and it was in that sinless, imperishable body He ascended into Heaven, and is sitting at the right hand of His Father.

... And something else ... and this leads us into His third appearance ... His first appearance was when He came to earth, took upon Himself flesh, went to the cross and bore our sin, - **Heb. 9:26** *he [hath] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself* ... His second appearance was when He ascended **Heb. 9:24** into heaven itself, *now to appear in the presence of God for us.* ... And His third appearance will take place when He comes again to this earth, **Heb. 9:28** *unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* ...

In those last moments on the Mount of Olives with His disciples, ... after He had finished speaking to them, **Acts 1:9** when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up [*ἐπαίρω, raised up*]; and a cloud received him out of their sight. **10** And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; **11** Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up [*ἀναλαμβάνω, taken up*] from you into heaven, shall so come *in like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven. ... And in what manner was that?! ... *As a person, in human form!* ... In other words, Jesus was taken up into Heaven through the clouds *in human form*, and

He will return to earth *in human form!* ... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come *in like manner as ye have seen him go* into heaven. ... He will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go! ... And just as He was seen going up into Heaven, He will be seen coming back, **Rev. 1:7** Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.

And He is coming back to reign on this earth! ... Will you know Him when He returns? ... How will you know Him since you have never met Him and never seen Him with your own eyes? ... *You will know Him*, for as John wrote, **I Jn. 3:2** it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, *when he shall appear*, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ... Every child of God will know the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns, - they will know Him straightaway, **I Thess. 4:16** 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: ¹⁷ 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. ... *We shall know Him!* ... And something else ... Where are 'the dead in Christ' just now? What does it mean? Does it mean the 'dead in Christ', - when they die, - ... do they remain in their graves? ... Surely, when you die you are absent from the body and present with the Lord? Absolutely, the moment the believer dies they enter the presence of God in Heaven ... but when Christ returns they receive their new resurrection bodies, Paul explains, **I Cor. 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised [*ἐπαίρω*, *raised up ... the same word used when Jesus ascended into Glory, Acts 1:9*] incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ ... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

His coming is *personal*, and His coming is *promised* ... We don't know all the details, - and sometimes we can get lost in pointless speculation, - but when Jesus returns, we shall know Him the very instant He descends from the clouds! We shall know it when it happens ... like Simeon who had been waiting all His life for the Messiah, and then when the little Baby Jesus was placed into His arms, *he knew!* When it happens, *we shall know!* ... How will every eye see Him? That doesn't sound possible! But if the Word says it, you'd better believe it for we shall see how God brings it to pass when His Son returns to this earth!

But what about those who aren't expecting Him? ... They mock, "Where's your Jesus? You've been speculating for centuries, and He has never come!" ... Aye, they are right ... He hasn't come *yet*, but He *is* coming for He said He will! And when He returns, He will gather His people unto Himself ... but those who never

received Him, He will not receive. For whatever reason, they always turned Him away, - maybe they meant to receive Him ‘some time later in life’, maybe they didn’t receive Him because they reckoned they were good enough and they didn’t need Him. ... Jesus told about how some will come to Him on the day of judgment, and they will say, “Lord, we have preached and prophesied in Your Name, and we have cast out devils, and we have done so many wonderful things” ... And He will turn and reply to them, **Mt. 7:23** *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* ... If you don’t have Jesus in this life, you will not have Him in the next. If you turn Him away in this life, you will receive the result of what you did to Him, in the next life. Paul warned, **II Cor. 6:2** *behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation* ... as the writer to the Hebrews asked, **Heb. 2:3** *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation[?]*

Look again at our text, **Heb. 9:27** *it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* **28** *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.* ... Can I add one simple word at almost the end ... and you can ask yourself if this applies to you ... **Heb. 9:28** *and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without [my] sin unto salvation.* ... He dealt with *my* sin at Calvary, and it is no longer held against my name ... and that is what He has done for all who have accepted Him as their Saviour and Lord. ... Remember how, while He was here on earth He promised, **Jn. 14:2** *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

When He comes again, there will be the great multitude, - from all over the world, - who rise to meet Him, and we are looking forward to it already ... Sadly, there will be some who will not rise to meet Him. Instead, they will be frantically trying to run and hide, but there will be nowhere to escape. They will cry for the rocks to fall on them, but there will be nowhere for them to flee. ... In life, they didn’t want Him ... in death, - too late, - they cannot have Him and they will be consigned to the eternal fires of Hell. ... **Is. 55:6** *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Make sure you belong to the Saviour. Don’t take something as important as your faith in Christ for granted. *Make sure!* **Heb. 9:27** *it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* **28** *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.* ... ***Jesus Christ, - our Glorious Hope!***