

Appointed Once for Man to Die

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[0 : 00] Turn to your Bibles again to the book of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 40. I will be reading from verses 3 to verse 11.

Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3, and as our text is going to say, this is the word of God that stands forever. A voice of one calling, in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low. The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. A voice says, cry out. And I said, what shall I cry?

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass.

[1 : 14] The grass withers, and the flowers fall. But the word of our God stands forever. You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout.

Lift it up, do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, here is your God. See the sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him.

See his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them close to his heart.

He gently leads those that have young. Amen. Do you remember how we used to get appointment reminders?

Like for the dentist, or for the doctor. We would get those hard copy of business cards. Perhaps like me, for the dentist, I would get a tooth-shaped business card.

[2 : 15] And those business cards, you had to keep on hand. You had to keep them near, because that was how you remembered. Six months from now, I need to get my teeth cleaned. I remember my mom would post that tooth-shaped business card on the fridge, so you couldn't miss it.

You would open the fridge, and it would smack you in the face. Six months from now, you need to get your teeth cleaned. Now, as electronic technology has developed and become more complex, somehow, too, so have appointment reminders.

I hadn't been to the dentist in a few years, and the first time that I finally got back, I went to leave, and I expected that appointment card. But they didn't give it to me. Yet they assured me that I was going to receive reminders.

And I surely did. Multiple phone calls telling me, your appointment is coming. Text messages demanding a yes or no that I would be there.

Emails. Google Calendar invites asking me if I was going to be attending my dentist appointment. It is an understatement to say, my dentist made certain that I didn't forget the all-important appointment to have my teeth cleaned.

[3 : 32] Now, why did they do that? Why flood every possible avenue of communication with reminders? Because, as we all know, we tend to be forgetful, and so people wouldn't show up to their appointments.

This morning, God gives us in His Word the ultimate appointment reminder. In fact, it's four appointments that we're going to look at today.

And make no doubt about it, there is no chance whatsoever that you and I will miss any of the appointments related to us, and there is no doubt whatsoever that God will miss any of the appointments related to Him.

They are certain. Destined, you could say. They are settled. Four appointments in our passage. Two that relate to us, and two that relate to Jesus.

So, open with me, if you have your Bible, to Hebrews 9. That's where we're going to be this morning. Hebrews 9. We're just going to be considering two verses.

[4 : 43] Verse 27 and verse 28 of Hebrews 9. Near the end of your Bible. It's at the beginning of verse 27 that we see the first appointment, the first certain appointment, which is this.

You and I are going to die. God's Word says, beginning in verse 27, and just as it is appointed for man to die once.

So, there is a finality to this earthly life. There is an end point. There is a finish line to this life. Your tombstone will have an end date.

Unless Jesus returns, you and I will die. We don't know when that day will be, but God does. He has determined when we will breathe our last.

Just as we read in Isaiah 40, He blows on the grass and the flower, and they wither. He has determined that day. Not just when we will breathe our last, but He has determined every day in between.

[5 : 51] In Acts 17, we hear these words, In Him we live and move and have our being. So every day that you and I are alive, it is because God is sustaining us.

He is keeping our hearts beating, our lungs filling with air, our brains functioning. We live because God keeps us alive.

And He keeps us alive for just as long as He has determined. Job spoke rightly when he said these words to God in Job 14.5.

Since man's days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass. What is Job talking about there when he says that? What are these appointed limits that can't be passed? He's talking about death. There is a sense in which we cannot get past that appointed limit that God has set for when we will die.

[6 : 55] Why? We have so many days. Or as Job says, so many months. The number of our months is with God. Our lifespan is decided by Him.

And did you know that God decided how long we would live even before we were born? We read these words in Psalm 139.

In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. So God had already recorded every single day of our lives.

The annals of your life are written down and recorded and kept in the library of heaven. Every single day. Set in stone.

God brings us into this world. He keeps us alive in this world. And one day, He will take us out of this world on the appointed day that He has set.

[7 : 59] So this is a certain appointment that God will keep. The outcome is unavoidable. What has been appointed to happen will happen. The end of our earthly lives is inevitable.

Some translations of Hebrews 9.27 will say, man is destined to die. That's a good way of putting it. Destiny.

That conveys that rock-solid certainty. Now some people will associate destiny with this idea of fate. This impersonal force that is at work in our universe that can't be thwarted or stopped or changed. We'll have ourselves a merry little Christmas if the fates allow.

There is no such thing as fate. That is just our futile attempt to erase God's presence. So you are destined to die.

[9 : 02] That is true. But it's not fated to happen because of some kind of nebulous, impersonal, amoral force at work in the universe. You are fated.

You are destined to die not because of fate but because of a very personal God who has numbered your days. It's a fixed day.

There is no getting around it. You and I will die. Do you believe that? Do you believe that you will die as God has determined even before you were born?

Or is there some part of us deep down that is hoping in some kind of way that we can avoid death? Many people hope to live longer.

Many people hope that some kind of medical advancements and breakthroughs will occur that will drastically lengthen our lives. But some people even think and hope to avoid death altogether.

[10 : 04] not just live longer but unending lives and they go to great lengths to try to achieve this impossible dream. One of those people is named Brian Johnson.

Brian Johnson is a billionaire and he has been pursuing these futile endeavors. His goal, in his words, is to make death optional.

He's even given a name to his project. It's called Project Blueprint. And as you might guess, being a billionaire, not only has he invested lots of time into this project but lots of money as well to the tune of two million dollars a year.

Doing all kinds of things to try to make himself younger and ultimately to avoid death. By taking over 100 daily supplements. By exercising like crazy.

Doing blood transfusions. Having undergone things that I don't even understand like gene therapy and red light therapy. He claims, and I quote, it's possible to say with a straight face that death may no longer be inevitable.

[11:12] But here's the irony. This man is 45 years old and he basically looks like a healthy 45 year old. Now a very healthy 45 year old. You should look very healthy at 45 if you're spending two million dollars a year on this anti-aging project.

But he still looks like a mortal man. In fact, I came across an article written by somebody that I don't think holds to a Christian worldview. And this is how that person described him having seen him in real life.

In person, Johnson looks human. Physically fit, but mortal. Middle-aged. Brian Johnson is not the first person to try to cheat death.

Humans have been doing this for centuries. Brian Johnson's methods are just the latest iteration of that. We can go back to the 1960s. Cryo-preservation.

Just a fancy word for being frozen after you die. Still dead, but at least you're frozen. Go farther back than that, though. Way farther back. Alexander the Great.

[12:18] He died over 300 years before the birth of Christ. supposedly he tried to find the fountain of youth. China's first emperor tasked his best chemist with trying to discover a potion that would make him immortal.

Or how about Nicolas Flamel? 200 years before he died, or 200 years after he died, the stories began to circulate that in the 1400s he had successfully crafted the philosopher's stone.

And from that stone, supposedly, you can make the elixir of life. This last example is especially ironic in a very sad way. It's again from the 1400s.

Pope Innocent VIII. He's considered to be the first recipient of a blood transfusion. He was dying. And it was thought that perhaps he could extend his life, prolong it, if he actually received blood from a young donor.

And so actually, three 10-year-old boys were chosen, and they were paid to donate their blood to him. The transfusion was a failure.

[13:29] The Pope eventually died. And those three young boys died as well because of the primitive understanding of blood transfusions at that time. So Pope Innocent was not innocent.

He had those boys' blood in his body. He had those boys' blood on his hands. All in a vain attempt to beat death. Every single one of those examples.

We see people who have failed in their attempts to cheat death. No fountain of youth has been found. No potion of immortality. No elixir of life.

No blood transfusion successful to cure that terrible disease of death. Everyone who has been cryogenically frozen is still dead. Brian Johnson can try as hard as he'd like to make death optional. But unless Jesus comes back first, guess what? He's going to die. We can try as hard as we'd like to think that modern medicine or any other man-made effort can remove the reality of death.

[14:34] But human effort has yet to succeed and it never will succeed. And why can we say that with so much certainty? Because God says right here, it is appointed for man to die once.

God has told us. He doesn't just tell us in the book of Hebrews of death. In the very first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, in chapter 3, we learn of the entrance of sin into the world.

And with sin followed death. And then in chapter 5, just two chapters later, we're given a genealogy. A listing of men who lived and the sons that followed after them.

And do you know what we read with every single one of those men except one that we'll come to? And he died. And he died. And he died. Repeated over and over again to remind us over and over again, unless the Lord returns, you and I will die.

Now aside from two men, one of whom is in that genealogy, Enoch, and another, Elijah, who were taken by God in very special ways, aside from those two men, every other human being has died.

[15 : 52] Even Elijah and Enoch went to be with the Lord. Their earthly existence in this life still did come to an end. And ours will too.

Unless Christ returns, death is inevitable. In the early days of the church, when the gospel was first spreading from Jerusalem into the surrounding areas, there was a king who was ruling over the land of Israel.

His name was Herod. And in chapter 12 of the book of Acts, Herod gives an address to the people. Beginning in verse 21, this is what we read. On an appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them.

And the people were shouting, the voice of a God and not a man! Immediately, the angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give glory to God.

And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. So Herod, in his arrogance, received the worship of the people.

[17 : 05] And God struck him down. He died right there. That is a fitting punishment for Herod's sin. The people were shouting, the voice of a God.

What's the defining feature of deity? Even false deities. This idea of immortality. And so what does God do? He strikes him dead.

What a visual display for the people in that moment. Look at him now, lying there, dead. Feeble, frail, mortal man that he is.

From the dust he came into the dust he returned, eaten by worms, the very creatures of the dust of the earth. And when did all of this happen?

How does that passage start? On the appointed day. So Herod had planned for this day. Herod had circled it on his calendar.

[18 : 07] He had sent the heralds out announcing, the king will give his speech. Come to hear his speech. He thought, this is the day appointed for me to deliver my great oration.

And God said, this is the day appointed for you to die. Herod had circled this day on his calendar. God had this day already circled on his calendar.

What makes us any different than Herod? Frail, feeble human beings that we are. Maybe we don't have people in our lives who are mistaking us for gods.

I hope we don't. But do we still live without a thought of our mortal existence, planning our days as though we are in complete control?

Our earthly lives will end, maybe very unexpectedly. You may plan for tomorrow, but tomorrow may not come. What is your life?

[19 : 10] James 4.14 asks us. The answer, for you are a mist that appears for a short time and then vanishes. So whether you live a long life or you live a short life, whether your end comes slowly or your end comes abruptly, your end will come.

It's certain. It's appointed for you to die. And the writer of Hebrews says, it is appointed for man to die once. We see that there in verse 27.

You die once. Some people believe that you die and that you are reincarnated. You come back to this earth as someone or even more strangely perhaps as something else.

They're gravely mistaken. God says death, one time event. Not repeated over and over again. Life is not lived over and over. We die once.

And it is crucial that we understand this. It's crucial that we understand we die once because there's another appointment after death that we will not miss.

[20 : 18] And we see this appointment in the second half of verse 27. You and I will be judged. Verse 27. And just as it is appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment.

You and I don't get any second chances. There isn't another opportunity after death to turn from our ways and to repent and believe in Christ.

You die and you will be judged. You will be judged according to the life that you live. The only life that you had on this earth. So you won't be able to stand before God's throne and say, oh, I was wrong.

I stand corrected. I would like to turn from my sin in my own ways and trust in you and live with you forever now that I'm in your very presence. I see my error and I'd like to try again.

It won't be like playing games with a small child. Maybe you're playing a game where they need to roll a specific number, the number six. So the kid rolls the die and they get a five and they grab that die and they roll it again.

[21 : 26] And they get a two and they grab that die again and they roll it again. They get a one and they keep going until they get their six. We won't get those kinds of do-overs. We won't get those kinds of mulligans.

It's appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment. So the point here is there's nothing you can do between death and judgment to change your eternal destiny that was already decided in this life, the only life that you have.

Now we see here judgment day is coming. It is unavoidable, just as unavoidable as death. It is just as certain as death.

And there's no opportunity after death to change that coming judgment. The opportunity is now. The Bible puts it this way. Today is the day of salvation.

Today is that day. When you die, the day of salvation will have passed. The sun will have set on that day. And the only day of judgment is what awaits for you.

[22 : 38] Are you prepared for that day? Are you prepared for judgment? Are you prepared for death? But then are you prepared for judgment? And there's only one way to be prepared.

And that hinges on the third appointment that we see in our text. the appointment that Jesus Christ has died. Look at verse 28.

So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many. So there's a parallel here that the writer of Hebrews is drawing our attention to between verses 27 and 28.

Just as man, so also it's implied Christ. just as man died, so too did Christ die.

We see the similarity there. But there's also some great difference that we have to see. At first, we need to see when thinking about our own deaths, we are obviously thinking about the future, a day that is coming.

[23 : 45] When we're thinking about the death of Christ, we're thinking about the past, a day that has already come and happened. The appointment has been kept.

We will die. Christ has already died. What we can be sure of will happen with us has in fact already happened with Jesus. That's the first difference.

Here's the second. When talking about the death of Christ in verse 28, the writer of Hebrews doesn't use the word die like he did with man.

He uses a different word. He says Christ was offered or perhaps sacrificed. So you and I die, but Christ was given.

He was offered up. There's something different about his death. There's something very distinctive about his death. He sacrificed his life. He laid down his life.

[24 : 47] And why did he do that? Because you and I are sinful people. It is who we are by nature. We come into this world bent away from God.

We are born as rebels and we continue in our rebellion in this life, ignoring God and his good laws, disobeying him, wanting nothing to do with him.

And if God did nothing, every single one of us would live and then die and be punished for our sins. Destined to die once and after that to face judgment.

And the judgment for every single one of us, if we died in our sinful state, would be eternal, unending torment in hell. God.

Because that is the just punishment for sin committed against a holy, righteous, good, eternal God. But God did in fact do something about this great problem of sin of which all of us are guilty.

[25 : 56] This is a universal problem. No one is exempt. Romans 3.10 says, none is righteous, no, not one. Romans 3 goes on to say, all have turned aside, and later, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We are all sinners, and yet God has done something about the problem of our sin. He appointed His own Son to die.

Before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1 says, we saw that in Sunday school, it was Jesus who was chosen for this very purpose.

God the Son set apart by God the Father. And God the Son was glad to be set apart. He was willingly appointed. And our passage in Hebrews tells us what the purpose is that Jesus was appointed for.

To be offered to bear the sins of many. He was appointed to be sacrificed, to take away the sins of His people. He lived a perfect life.

[27 : 02] It was free from any sin. And so then as a sinless man, He then could die for sinners in the place of sinners, shedding His blood upon a cross of wood.

And yet three days later, He rose again from the grave, defeating sin and death, showing in fact that He had defeated them, showing in fact that God's righteous, just wrath, His anger against sin had been turned away.

And as a risen, living Savior, Jesus will never die again. Just as it is appointed for man to die once, so also Christ was offered once.

He shed His blood upon that cross one time, and that one offering was enough to pay the price for the sins of all His people. The job is finished.

the perfect sinless one died in the place of sinful people to deal with sin, to take away sin fully, completely. All that was needed to be done to pay the price for sins Christ accomplished so that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.

[28 : 24] So when you die, obviously not if, when you die, and you stand before God's throne in judgment, your only hope is to be found in Jesus.

Your only hope is in believing with a humble, sincere faith that He died for your sins upon that cross, and that He rose again, that you might be forgiven of your sins.

Because in yourself, apart from Christ, you have nothing good to offer to God. Now you may be thinking, but I'm a good person. Yet as we've already seen, God's Word says otherwise.

No one is righteous. No, not one. You were born sinful. You make sinful choices. That is the condition of all of us as we enter into this world.

In fact, God's Word says that if we break just one of God's laws, we then become accountable for all of it. We become transgressors. We become lawbreakers even in just that one breaking of the law.

[29 : 35] So when we stand before God, we stand before Him in judgment, there is no room to say, well, I was basically a good person. That's not good enough.

You and I need a perfect record of righteousness and there is only one who has that perfect record of righteousness and His name is Jesus Christ, the one who was appointed to die once to bear the sins of many.

You see, when Jesus died upon that cross, He took the sin of His people upon Himself and He bore their sins in His body. And in dying upon that cross, He also gave His righteousness to His people so that when that day of judgment comes, standing before the throne, God's people can say, I'm righteous not because of my own inherent righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Christ given to me.

I'm clothed in His righteousness, blameless before the throne. It's a righteousness that comes to us by faith in Christ.

So you see, your only hope on the day of judgment is found in Jesus. But you must turn to Him before that day of judgment arrives.

[30 : 54] You must turn to Him before you die. Today is the day of salvation. Believe in Christ, the one who was offered once to bear the sins of many.

So that is what Jesus did at His first coming, His first appearance in the world. He bore sins. He carried them in His body, in His death, appointed from eternity past.

He dealt with sin. But that's not the only appointment of Christ that Hebrews draws our attention to. We see another appointment, and this is an appointment that is still to come, and one that Jesus is just as sure to keep as His appointment to die.

To see it, let's read Hebrews 9, 28, the whole verse this time. So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

So the first appointment was for Jesus to die, and we've seen that appointment was kept. Well, now we see the second appointment. Jesus is coming again, and He's going to keep that appointment as well.

[32 : 07] Christ is coming a second time, and this is the final time, but it's not to deal with sin. He's already done that. So He's not going to die again, as a substitute for sins when He comes.

No, He will not deal with sins, but He will have dealings with us. We see that in our passage. He will save those who belong to Him and are waiting.

They are eagerly waiting for His return. And also, implied here, those that are not saved, He's also coming to bring about judgment.

There's a condemnation for those who are not eagerly waiting for His return because they are not found in Him. They don't belong to Him. They have not trusted in Him.

And there is a judgment that is awaiting those people. So we who are in Christ, we long for that day when He's going to bring full, complete salvation.

[33 : 09] We who are in Christ now, we are free from the penalty of sin. We are free from the power of sin and one day we're going to be free from the very presence of sin.

Not a remnant of sin will be found when Christ returns to establish the new heavens and the new earth. Not a remnant of sin in us, not a remnant of sin around us will be left in all of Jesus' new creation that He establishes.

The Bible calls this the home of righteousness or the place where righteousness dwells. No trace of sin will be found there.

And so that means sinners, those who continue in their sin, those who love their sin, those who are going their own way and saying, I don't want the Savior.

I'm going to keep going my way. Rejecting Jesus. Jesus will have dealings with them as well. Those sinners will not be found in the new heavens and the new earth because it is the home of righteousness.

[34 : 19] It is the place where righteousness dwells and there is no place for sin in that home. So Christ will have dealings with you when He comes because He is coming a second time as judge.

He has been appointed as judge. Now He Himself said during His earthly life, in His first coming, Jesus said in John 12, 47, I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

So in His first coming, in the incarnation, when God the Son entered into this world as a man, He came not to condemn us for our sins, but to bear our sins for us.

He came to seek and to save the lost. He came to bear the sins of His people in His body as He hung upon that cross. But now, in His return, He will come as judge.

In Revelation 22, we hear Jesus say this, Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me to repay each one for what He has done.

[35 : 33] And then after He says those words, the Spirit of God and the people of God say, Come. And there's a desire, an earnest desire, a gladness. Yes, Lord, come.

We want You to come. Because for the people of God, for those who have the righteousness of Christ as their own, we are eagerly awaiting His return to make all things right.

We're not shrinking back in fear at the thought of His return. We're excited. We are joyful. We are longing for that day. But others are not.

Not everyone says come. Because if you are outside of Christ, that will not be a happy day. If you are outside of Christ, that is a day of darkness and gloom.

Because Jesus Christ, the righteous judge, is coming. And He's been appointed to come. If that's not totally clear to us here in Hebrews, it definitely is in Acts 10.

[36 : 36] Verse 42 reads, He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. That's Jesus Christ. Appointed by God as judge of all people.

The living and the dead. That is all-inclusive. You are either alive or you are dead. No one escapes His judgment. Acts 17 as well beginning in verse 31 tells us that God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man that He has appointed.

And if there was any obscurity about who is this man, we'll just continue reading and we see it is Jesus because verse 31 continues, Jesus Christ died and He rose again and because of that sure certain reality, we can also have certainty and assurance that He is coming again on a fixed day, on an appointed day.

The appointed judge is coming and all of us appointed to die will stand for that appointed judgment. No one will be left out. No one will get a pass. No one will be overlooked. All will be held to give an account of Himself.

[38 : 04] That's you and me. We are going to be giving an account. So make no mistake about it. God is all-inclusive in His judgment.

And yet salvation on that day is found exclusively in Jesus. So where will your hope rest on the appointed day? When you give an account, what words will be on your lips?

You've heard these words from God here in Hebrews. You have heard that you will die. You have heard that you will be judged. You have heard that Christ died for sinners like you and I and that He will return one day to save His people and to condemn His enemies.

this is the appointment reminder on the fridge. It is smacking us in the face. What will you do with what you've heard?

You see, one day the question will be, what did you do with what you heard? Did you reject Christ? Or did you turn to Him in faith? Did you believe the good news about His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins?

[39 : 13] Or did you reject that good news? The question will be, what did you do with what you heard? But that is not the question today. The question today is, what will you do?

Not what did you do? Will you receive what you heard from this book given to us by God? Will you receive this not as the words of men, but as the very word of God, which it is?

Or will you dismiss it? And just get back to the life that you were living when you leave this building. Just marching to your appointed death one day to stand before God with not a shred of hope.

Christ is coming. Will you come to Him before it's too late? And you stand in judgment with no second chances available to you. You can't be like that kid rolling the dice, trying over and over to get the number right.

This is the day of salvation. Will you turn to Christ and live? You only have this one life. This is the day. This is the opportunity to throw yourself at His feet and say, have mercy on me, a sinner.

[40 : 24] So you call out to Him for the forgiveness of your sins. You do that even today, and you will find a merciful and gracious Savior who welcomes you with arms wide open.

He's ready to receive you into His presence this day, and He's ready to receive you one day with joy when He returns. And we will be gathered around the throne of God, not to be cast out at the judgment, but to be found innocent and blameless, clothed in white robes, pure and bright, crying out hallelujah for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory. Will you be there on that day? You can. Look to Christ.

There is life found in Him today, and there is an eternity of bliss that awaits around God's throne. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, what a day that will be gathered around Your throne, singing Your praises for all of eternity, worshiping You in perfect peace.

[41 : 39] Father, we know that that is for those who have trusted in Your Son. There is a coming day in which we will stand before Your throne, and there will be judgments made. Father, we pray that even this morning, all who are far from You would come to You in Christ, trusting in Him that they may be found righteous in that day.

Father, bring sinners to Yourself. Sanctify Your church and make us to be eager for Christ's return when we're with You for all of eternity. Send us from here with that joy and that hope this morning, we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. From Psalm 89, righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne. Steadfast love and faithfulness go before You.

Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of Your face, who exult in Your name all the day, and in Your righteousness are exalted.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.