

## Appointment

03/24/2012

Hymns: 4 Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine  
Psalm 23

55 Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim it

## Appointments

*It's **appointed** unto man once to **die**, then the **judgment**.* (Hebrews 9:27)

Appointments are important things. We make them to see doctors, dentists, and other professionals. This past week, I had an appointment to sign some tax documents. I dutifully recorded the time and date of that appointment in my calendar about a week earlier. Well, Monday, March 19th at 1:30, I showed up right on time. Unfortunately, the person whom I had expected to see was not there and neither were the documents to review and sign nor did the secretary have any record of my appointment.

I proceeded to explain that the appointment was made by the national office and perhaps the local office didn't receive the notice. It wasn't until I went home and checked my calendar again that I realized that I had showed up **exactly twenty-four hours early**. Apparently, I had made an error in entering the date.

## Drop-Dead Date

I mentioned that my appointment was to see the tax advisor. There are few more ominous dates that we have to contend with than April 15th--the income tax **deadline** also known as Tax Day. Have you completed your taxes yet?

Every year we hear reports of **procrastinators**. They know the **deadline** is approaching, but they really do not want to face up to it until the last minute. They likely owe money also and really hate to part with it before they have to. The late evening news invariably has a correspondent outside the **one area post office** kept open for the express purpose of receiving these mailings before the midnight **deadline**.

*...in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except **death** and taxes.* Benjamin Franklin

Today we'll be looking at an appointment we will all keep and how to be prepared for it.

## Mortality

You may recall that six weeks ago we looked at the Bible from a very broad perspective. We saw the story of the Bible could be viewed as a unit described by three great events:

1. The creation and fall of Man (paradise made and lost)
2. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
3. The judgment and new creation (paradise restored)

As we just read in Hebrews:

*It's **appointed** unto man once to **die**.*

In the beginning, we learned, that God made a perfect creation, but man disobeyed God. This led to the curse of man and instituted the process of death. Man is mortal. Here was God's promise:

*Genesis 2*

*[16] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:*

*[17] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die.***

In Genesis 3 we read that God followed through with His promise:

*Genesis 3*

*[17] And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt **not** eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

*[19] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou **return unto the ground**; for out of it wast thou taken: **for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.***

In Romans we read the following:

*...the wages of sin is death; ... (Romans 6:23a)*

That's pretty clear. Death came by sin. That is, failing to meet God's perfect standard.

## **Resurrection**

But what happens when we die? In our broad outline of things (creation, resurrection, new creation) we'll skip down to number three. There will be a judgment, followed by a new creation. If there is death and an afterlife, that implies some sort of resurrection or return to life. The Bible says that there will be **two** resurrections. Let's see what they are:

John 5

*[28] Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,*

*[29] And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the **resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation.***

That identifies the **two** resurrections and **two** fates, but we need to clarify things here.

Matthew 25 puts it this way:

*[46] And these [that is the **unrighteous**] shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into **life eternal.***

Revelation 20 gives us more detail about these events. In verse 4, John sees the souls of those faithful to the Lord during a coming time of testing called the Tribulation:

*[4] ...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

[5] *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the **first resurrection**.*

[6] *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the **first resurrection**: on such **the second death hath no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

[12] *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged** out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**.*

[13] *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man **according to their works**.*

[14] *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death**.*

[15] *And **whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**.*

The problem for those participating in the second death is that they will be judged **by their works** and that's a very tough thing because **God's standard is perfection**:

Romans 3

[23] *For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Let's look at another group of those participating in the first resurrection:

I Corinthians 15

[42] *So also is the resurrection of the dead [referring to the righteous dead]. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

[45] *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [speaking of Jesus Christ] was made a quickening spirit.*

[50] *Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

[51] ***Behold**, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

[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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

[53] *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this **mortal** must put on immortality.*

[54] *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this **mortal** shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory**.*

(I Corinthians 15:42-54)

Okay. we've learned that we will all face death.

I have an appointment to meet my maker. You have an appointment to meet your maker. It is a specific date and a specific time.

February 25th, a little over a year ago, at 11:00 PM, Melvin Harrod (whom you may have known), breathed his last breath. Six weeks ago, Gladys Harrod, sat here in the service that we had where we

talked about the big picture of scripture. Many of you were here. She was alive and she sang hymns. On February 26th at 3:00 PM she drew her final breath. Immediately, her body began to cool, and she was gone.

Mom and Dad kept their appointments to meet their maker. We will be keeping ours as well. Are you prepared for that ultimate appointment? How can we be prepared?

The Evangelism Explosion organization poses the following two probing questions:

1. Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you can say you **know for certain** that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?
2. Suppose that you were to **die today** and stand before God and he were to say to you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" what would you say?

A young man approached Jesus with a similar question. We read about it in Matthew chapter 19:

*[16] And, **behold**, one came and said unto him [that is Jesus], **Good Master**, what **good thing** shall **I do**, that I may have eternal life?*

*[17] And he said unto him, **Why callest thou me good?** there is **none good but one, that is, God**: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

*[18] He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no **murder**, Thou shalt not **commit adultery**, Thou shalt not **steal**, Thou shalt not **bear false witness**,*

*[19] **Honour thy father and thy mother**: and, Thou shalt **love thy neighbour as thyself**.*

*[20] The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

*[21] Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be **perfect**, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

*[22] But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

*[23] Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*[25] When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?*

*[26] But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but **with God all things** are possible.*

What was the problem this man had? Was it his wealth? No, Jesus got to the point with him immediately. The man addressed Jesus **not as Lord**, but as "Good Master" (or teacher). He was not willing to acknowledge that Jesus was the Son of God and as such, that He was God. And he was blind to his own sin. Jesus **told him** there was **no work he could do** to get him into heaven, because none (other than God) is capable of meeting God's standard, that is to be **perfect**. But as Jesus said, while it is impossible to work your way to heaven, God made it possible through His grace and provision.

- Will possessions keep you out of heaven?
- Will good works get you there?

No, salvation is a work of God, not a work of man.

- Will church membership save you?
- Will baptism save you?
- Will giving money to the church save you?
- Will buying a memorial brick in a church building save you?
- Will being an ordained minister save you?
- Will following the Golden Rule save you?
- Will following the Ten Commandments save you?

No, these are simply religious acts and **no one** can live up to God's **perfect** standard.

Romans 3

*[10] As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one:*

Titus 3

*[5] **Not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

Ephesians 2

*[8] For by **grace** are ye saved through **faith**; and **that not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God:  
[9] **Not of works**, lest any man should boast.*

While it is not my intent to diminish the focus here, the next verse is so often omitted and yet so important for Christians to understand, let me digress just slightly here to quote it and briefly comment on it.

*[10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained **that we should walk** in them.*

Christian life begins with the **free gift** of salvation. While that gift is free to us, it certainly was not without cost. Jesus took the punishment for our sins on the cross. It cost Him His life and His precious blood. We are **not saved by our works** but **by our faith** and **by God's grace**. We then serve **our Lord** as a labor of **love** (not of obligation) just as ideally at least in this life we selflessly serve our beloved husband or wife.

## **Priorities**

Now some may say, I'll think about it. It's not a priority now. Jesus says **it is a priority**. In Luke 12:13-20 He describes the story of **a certain rich man** whose passion was accumulating wealth. Jesus said in verse 15:

***a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.***

When the man finally had accumulated more than enough, He received the sobering news in verse 20:

***Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?***

We tend to ignore important things and while we focus on those things which are less important. In the end, we regret not having better priorities. Perhaps that's one of Satan's better lies. This salvation thing can be done another day or another time.

The Apostle Paul says it this way in II Corinthians 6:2:

*...**behold, now** is the accepted time; **behold, now** is the day of salvation.*

Let's get back to that big picture and that all important link between the creation and the new creation---the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We'll celebrate that event, Easter, just two weeks from today. It is upon that pivotal point in history that the fate of all mankind rests **and what you do** with that event will determine your eternal destiny.

Mom and Dad put their **faith alone** in God's **grace alone**, through **Christ alone**. By the authority of scripture, that is how they **knew** they would go to heaven. They trusted the good news of the finished work of the death, burial, and resurrection of the **Lord** Jesus Christ, and they have gone home to be with Him. While their bodies lie cold in a grave, we can rest assured by the absolute truth of God's word that they will receive their new perfect bodies when they participate in the resurrection of the just.

You too can have that confidence if you turn from your sins and trust the **Lord** Jesus Christ as your savior. If you haven't done so, today can be the defining day of your life. Now you can be prepared for **your** most important appointment. Have you made that decision? If not, I trust you will make it right now.

### **Benediction**

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6)

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