

HERALD OF HOPE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q21) Does Hebrews 11:39-40 Teach a General Resurrection?

Hebrews 11:39-40 states: *“And these all (Old Testament saints), having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”* Does this teach a General Resurrection; that Old Testament saints and Church Age saints rise together?

These two verses do not teach anything directly relating to the question of the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. There is no greater need in studying any Biblical passage than to consider the immediate context and the place it occupies in the message of the book in which it appears. **Perfection**, in Hebrews is the finished work of Christ.

Note first of all **the people** to whom it was written. *“All these”* (Heb. 11:39), refers to all the Old Testament saints mentioned in verses four to thirty-eight. It encompasses those who have placed their faith in the Lord and His revelation and have steadfastly endured throughout the pressures and perplexities which they have faced in their journey through life. The Lord Himself has witnessed to their faithfulness and consequently He has given them a good report. Heb. 11:2 states: *“By it (faith) the elders obtained a good report”*. *“Without faith it is impossible to please him”* (Heb. 11:6).

Note secondly, **the proclamation** made concerning them in Heb. 11:39. And all these, *“having obtained a good report (testimony) through faith...”* The emphasis here is laid on their continuing faith in the promise given them by the Lord, but they could not receive its fulfilment until Christ came.

Note thirdly, **the problem** about the promise made to them. Old Testament saints had a good testimony through faith but *“received not the promise”*. We need to consider what the Hebrews believed about **God’s promise**. It had nothing to do directly with their resurrection but it has everything to do with **“their Resurrector”**, the Lord Jesus – His incarnation – His virtuous life – His vicarious death and His victorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the throne of God – Heb. 12:2. **He, and the salvation He has procured for us, is the promise.**

Peter exhorted the nation of Israel to repent of their refusal to receive Christ and to be baptised – identifying with Christ, on account of the remission of sins. He then told them they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, *“for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”* (Acts 2:36-39).

Paul, speaking to Jews in Antioch, said concerning David: *“Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus...whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent”* (Acts 13:23-26). Paul then declared that *“the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled”* (Acts 13:32-33). The promise was Christ!

The promise did what the Law could not do.

“He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:37-39).

Paul defended himself before King Agrippa, saying:

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers” (Acts 26:6).

Note fourthly, **the provision** for the New Testament saints Heb. 11:40; *“God having provided some better thing for us”*. This is the recurring theme of the Book of Hebrews. *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God”* (Heb. 7:19). *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Heb 10:14).

Note fifthly, **the perfection** obtained for us all in Heb 11:40. That they should not *“without us (apart from us) be made perfect”*.

The sacrifices offered by O.T. saints had no capacity to make the believer perfect (Heb 10:1); all they could do was **remind** them of their sins. *“In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year”* (Heb. 10:3-4). However, Christ’s offering for sins was only needed once, and the results of that sacrifice are eternal in the perfecting of all believers (Heb. 10:11-14).

Christ and His finished work is God’s promise. The O.T. saints looked forward to Christ’s life, death

and resurrection and the perfection that is available through Him (Heb.7:18-19). Once Christ died and rose the Old Testament saints could rise because **perfection had come**. You will notice that although the graves of Old Testament saints were opened when Christ died, they could not come out of the graves until "*after his resurrection*" (Matt.27:53). With Christ's work complete, "*perfection*" was available to Old and New Testament saints simultaneously. We now, with them, rejoice in Christ's perfect work, but our resurrection awaits the Rapture.

May every reader make sure that Christ is the ground of their Salvation.