

Daily Prayer: When Jesus comes, we shall be raised

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 p.961

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 p.987

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Philippians 3:20-4:1 p.982

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Daily Prayer builds around taking hold of what Jesus has already done – His:

- Birth / Incarnation
- Kingdom Life including his victory over Satan the desert, his miracles, his teaching
- Death on the cross
- Resurrection
- Ascension
- Sending the Spirit

There is still something Jesus has left to do. He's coming to the earth once again – this time not as a vulnerable baby, but as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

In church history, it's become the custom to think about Jesus and his return before Christmas; that's a big part of what **Advent** is about. Then on Dec 25, we start a few weeks and months remembering Jesus' birth and what it means.

However, in the outside world, for most people in our culture, there is no thought about what Jesus coming again means, and, whatever Christmas does mean to most people, it comes to end on Dec 25, and thoughts quickly go back to whatever we normally think about for the following weeks and months.

Don't get snippy with people who have no idea about church traditions. Engage with people where they're at without condemnation or condescension. Use every opportunity to get people thinking about the love and kindness and mercy and grace of God, especially at Christmas.

But do think about the second coming of Jesus and what it means. If we're truly trusting in Jesus, his return is something to give us great joy and hope.

When Jesus ascended into the heavenly realms, the disciples watching in astonishment were told he's coming back as you saw him go.

And the Bible assumes that when he comes back, we (those of us trusting Jesus – “in Christ”) will be in one of two situations: we'll be 'dead', or we'll be alive.

Dead = away from the body in a Spiritual resting place. “Fallen asleep”, the NT sometimes says, but that just means appearing to be asleep/ unresponsive; in fact our spirits are alive and well in heaven.

This is what happens when we die: we leave our old bodies behind, and our spirits rest in the heavenly realms/dimension. This is a place where what is normally unseen becomes visible: angels, saints, and those who have died before us – the *Communion of Saints*, which includes everyone trusting in Jesus, 'dead' or alive.

NDEs suggest the reality of another dimension. People at the time of death often start to inhabit both dimensions. These experiences suggest, but don't prove the unseen reality.

Alive = still in the body we're used to. Getting older, wearing out, resting away.

When Jesus comes back, What happens? See 1 Thessalonians 4. It starts by saying what will happen to the dead:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel,

and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

We sing about this – “When he shall come with trumpet sound/ O may I then in him be found”

The dead in Christ rise first – those 'asleep'.

17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Then if we're alive on earth as we are now, before death, we too will be raised.

“In the clouds, in the air”? Not what some people call “The Rapture”.

Reference back to:

Daniel 7:13-15

I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed..

Also Paul talked at other times about being “caught up to the third heaven”, in or out of the body (2 Cor 12:2-4).

What this means is that Jesus will be present again, the dead will be raised and any who are alive will be *transformed* – given new bodies like Jesus' risen body:

Philippians 3:20-4:1

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

You can be a citizen of one country while living in another; your exile doesn't affect your citizenship. We're citizens of heaven even as we live on earth. One day heaven and earth will be re-united, and we'll live with our new bodies, citizenship fully matching the new reality in us and around us.

Old Car with new engine

Last week – old body, new engine.

This week – new body to go with the new engine

Transformed *From*: Rusty, messy, damaged & disintegrating heap
To: stainless, glorious, powerful. Jesus-like body

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Spiritual body – *more* physical than a 'natural' body, not less (think about Jesus' risen body and how it is described the resurrection accounts).

We're transformed *from*: Perishable, dishonour, weakness

To:: imperishable, glory, power

So that's what's coming our way when Jesus re-appears out of the heavenly realm.

Why is all this important?

Religious mumbo-jumbo or an insight into truth and reality?

It comes from *history*, *revelation* and *reason*, and helps us to do (at least) two things:

1. **Remove fear** 1 Cor 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Fear of death/dying/the unknown. Such big fears can start at an early age – even before we're born. The more we know and trust God, the more we can deal with our fear. And part of the story is the knowledge of what's going to happen: the Love of God wins out – all who truly want to be in on His Kingdom can be.

Fear of life and living: Contradiction? Some people prefer the thought of non-existence to the thought of life. Some people think sickness is too much, or having a baby too difficult. Actually God is in control, and with Him we can learn to cope with life.

In either case, death isn't the *end*, it's the new *beginning* we all long for: the happy ending which marks the start of eternity

Last week: **your baptism is your funeral** – the funeral of your old, broken, hurt, sinful nature – it's lowered into the water and left there, destroyed for ever.

This week: **your funeral is your baptism**. Yes, your mortal remains will be lowered into the ground – but one day you will be raised up again, with a new body, in a new heaven and and new earth.

So whatever our troubles and afflictions in life, all this should help us handle and remove our fears about death and – the second thing – instil *hope* in us.

2. Instil hope

We have *hope*:

- we will be raised
- our loved ones and friends will be raised
- everyone can be raised

to take part in God's restored and renewed world. Heaven and Earth reunited; the ultimate ruler in the king of Kings and Lord of Lords;

This is worldview stuff. What we believe determines so much about the life we live.

If this life is all, and death leads to nothing, then, when trouble strikes me, "the sooner it's over the better". Or if it strikes someone else important to me "I've lost everything".

But because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, we no longer know that's not the case. Whatever has happened, in Jesus we have real, genuine, reliable hope. Here's some great insight from CS Lewis:

Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither.

—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Prayer – Get Ready!

Stop worldly ways, look to Jesus, and start the heavenly ones ("Repent and believe the good news about Jesus"!.) Let go the sin and brokenness; start living and healing with the help of the Holy Spirit living in you as preparation for the time when Jesus comes and gives you a body like his to match his Spirit in you.

Be willing to surrender feelings of fear around death – either fear of death itself, or fear to live. (This can lead us in to some deep but very fulfilling healing work).

1 Cor 15:20–23 – I belong to him, and he will raise me up when he comes again

...the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next

Take hold of **hope** for the future – and get started on the risen life with Jesus right now!

Discussion Points

- **Your baptism is a funeral; your funeral will be a baptism:** what does this mean, and how can we help each other understand its significance?
- **Hebrews 3:14-15** talks about Jesus coming to "deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery". What fears control or drive us? How can we begin to address them in the light of Jesus' coming and the resurrection promised to all who are in Him?
- We're to get a new '**Spiritual body**' (Phil 3:20–4:1). What does this imply for our future? Think about Jesus' risen body and how it is described in the resurrection accounts.
- "**The Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next**": Is this challenging, encouraging, or – what?