

GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

19.1.14 Joss Bray

Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life” Part 2

JN 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

We looked at this in its context of Jesus's dealings with Mary, Martha and Lazarus last week. We looked at how Jesus's power over death and then his ultimate sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection, demonstrated the truth of who he is and what he said.

This week we will look at what happens next when we die.

Now, we do not need to know all the details – and we cannot know them. The reality will be far more than we can describe or imagine now – and far more glorious and spectacular.

There is also a danger of some futility in getting into detailed arguments about it so we must be careful.

1CO 15:35 But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" ³⁶ How foolish!

- but that scripture goes on to discuss that very point so we will look at it later. It is just that we won't know all the answers but we can trust God that it will be very good.

Resurrection is vital to the Christian message:

1CO 15:12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith

- Jesus's resurrection stands as proof that there is resurrection of the dead – and our whole faith stands or falls by it.

Indeed – it is held as an elementary teaching:

HEB 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

- there are some things there which we will need to have a look at in the future as well – but we will look at the resurrection of the dead and what that is all about. Eternal judgement will have to wait till next week...

Who gets resurrected?

Paul states that everyone will be resurrected when he is preaching

^{AC 24} I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

And again in his first letter to the Corinthians

^{1CO 15:20} But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Do we go straight to be with God - what is the timescale after we die?

This is what happened when Jesus was on the cross - the thief next to him said:

^{LK 23:42} Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

^{LK 23:43} Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

And we know that it was only on the third day that Jesus rose from the dead. So we can infer that the experience of time after death isn't going to be the same as we are used to.

There really isn't much evidence for an "intermediate state" of consciousness and definitely not "purgatory". There is one mention of Hades in Matthew – which is usually translated "the gates of Hell" not "the gates of Hades" and some mentions of Hades in Revelation but it seems to equate to Hell.

Wikipedia: In the 16th century, Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin challenged the doctrine of purgatory. Both Calvin and Luther continued to believe in an intermediate state, but Calvin held to a more conscious existence for the souls of the dead than did Luther. For Calvin, believers in the intermediate state enjoyed a blessedness that was incomplete, in anticipation of the resurrection. Reformed theology largely followed Calvin's teaching on the intermediate state.^[15]

It may be like being asleep – indeed there are several scriptures that describe death as falling asleep:

^{1TH 4:13} Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Remember also that Jesus talked about Lazarus falling asleep and he had to make it clear to his disciples that he meant he was dead.

So whether we die (or fall asleep) sooner or later or even if we are still alive when Jesus comes back - we will all experience His coming, and the resurrection together.

(There is a tricky passage in Revelation that talks about a first resurrection for those who had particularly overcome in the last days, and a second one 1000 years later.

^{REV 20:4} I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.)

However, I think the principle still applies that we will experience resurrection together.

^{1CO 15:50} I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

This leads us on to -

What sort of bodies will we have?

^{1CO 15:35} But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds

another and fish another. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So it is a different form of body – a heavenly body – a splendid body.

The old one dies and perishes. The DNA and experience of the soul – epigenetic inheritance - if you like – lives on, and a heavenly or spiritual body is created.

^{1CO 15:42} So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, 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. ⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

The characteristics are –

It's imperishable – it won't decay, get old, need a hip replacement, get cancer etc

It has honour and glory – there will be nothing to be ashamed of and no-one will have a poor self image and no one will be able to compare their body to another's unfavourably or favourably.

It is spiritual and heavenly – a different substance from the dust of the earth.

In the same way our bodies now reflect mankind as it is and as designed in Adam, our new ones will bear the likeness of Jesus's resurrected body.

So what were the characteristics of Jesus's resurrection body that we know about from the bible?

It was in a similar form to the earthly body i.e. size and shape.

He wasn't an angel or a ghost.

It bore the scars of what happened to the earthly body.

It was not disabled or diseased.

It was different but recognisable.

It could appear anywhere, even behind locked doors.

It had substance and could be touched.
It could see and feel and think and talk and eat etc.

So when Jesus said to Martha—

JN 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

- Jesus went on to demonstrate exactly what he meant - he became the literal embodiment of resurrection for us.

What will our relationship to each other be?

We have seen that we will be recognisable and know each other – but what of special relationships like marriage?

MT 22:23 That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴ "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

Clearly they were trying to trick him into a logical difficulty to try and disprove the resurrection. However, as usual, Jesus had the answer -

MT 22:29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

Note that Jesus said they would be like the angels – not that they would be angels. There is a common misperception that when people die – especially children – that they become angels. There is nowhere that says this. I think we become like angels in the sense that gender is no longer that important – our eyes will be on higher things and greater glories and gender just will not matter that much any more. We won't be thinking about marriage or sex - there is something even better – if that's possible!

Next week in part 3 we will look at the tricky subject of what happens next – judgement and then where we will spend eternity.