

GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

26.1.14 Joss Bray

Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life” Part 3

We’ve been finishing off a series of what Jesus said about himself – the seven “I am” statements

The last one was “I am the resurrection and the life” and this is part 3. It looks like there will be a part 4 met week as well!

In part 1 we looked at Jesus’s power over death – in particular when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Then his ultimate sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. We noted that these events demonstrated the truth of what he said about himself.

In part 2 we started to look at what happens when we die. The main points were:

Resurrection from the dead is vital to the Christian message.

Everyone gets resurrected.

Dying is like falling asleep – then waking up for the next phase of life – which may be a long time later – but will be like an instant for us.

We will get a new body – a heavenly body. However, we will be recognisable and similar to our earthly body. And we do not become angels or ghosts. There will be no disease or disability.

And we won’t be married either.

So what happens next?

Judgement is going to happen – to everyone – living and dead

RO 14:10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

2TI 4:1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.

MT 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Remember – God is the judge – we are not to judge each other:

JAS 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

So when is it going to happen?

If we die before Jesus comes back – then we will wake up to it.

If we are alive when he does – the time and date will not be predictable:

1TH 5:1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly....

Although there are hints including –

MT 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

But we are definitely told to be ready and prepared at any time – like the wise and foolish virgins with their lamps.

So there is no escape from judgement day – it's going to happen. It will be an astounding, glorious and awesome day – so awesome that the natural world can not cope with the power and glory of God on that day. Whatever people believe here on earth and do with their lives will certainly count in eternity.

What happens at the last Judgement?

We won't know exactly till it happens but there are pointers in the bible:

There will be a book:

REV 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life.

And there will be a separation:

MT 25: 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

On what basis will people be judged?

REV 20:15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

So how do you get into the book of life that saves people from eternal punishment?

The jailer who Paul and Silas had a miraculous escape from asked that very question —

AC 16:29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" AC 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.

The jailer knew he needed saving. He had been confronted with the power of God and the faith of these two men.

And Paul made it clear in his letter to the Romans too -

RO 10:9if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

It's that simple – but not an easy choice – and means a complete change to living for God and not for ourselves.

We read in James that faith without actions is useless – what I think this means is that any sort of faith that doesn't change your life and produce good fruit, is faith with no value. It is just an intellectual belief which makes no difference. If we believe in Jesus as Lord and follow him as such – then our lives must show evidence of that. He must be Lord of our lives.

The sheep and goats passage in Matthew comes right after the parable of the talents where Jesus makes the point that our lives are expected to be fruitful – according to what God has given us.

We become the sheep that Jesus talked about when he said he is the gate for the sheep and that he is the good shepherd. The sheep know his voice and follow him.

We then qualify under the "sheep category" when Jesus separates the sheep from the goats -

MT 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

MT 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?'³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

MT 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

And note that the sheep didn't even realise that what they did, they did for Jesus. It wasn't done with the aim of impressing him – they did it because their lives had been changed. They were just being obedient to God and his heart for the poor and needy. These are challenging words for us – both individually and the church.

They receive an inheritance far better than an earthly one – a whole kingdom!

Sadly, the goats didn't know the Jesus and his voice and went their own way and lived selfish lives – ignoring Jesus and not even realising it. Note that they too recognise Jesus as Lord on Judgement day. There will be no doubt - but it is too late.

MT 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

MT 25:44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

MT 25:45 "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

MT 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

They receive the logical outcome of their lives on earth. When Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life" he meant it.

And also note that Jesus never said the sheep were sinless either – they were "righteous" – right with God. And that comes from God because:

EPH 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So being saved is not about doing good works – but doing good works is the result of being saved.

What about children and those who haven't heard about Jesus when they come to judgement?

Good questions – and my understanding is that God is merciful and just. Remember in James it says

JAS 2:13Mercy triumphs over judgment!

My belief is that people of any age who haven't had the opportunity to follow Jesus will be judged with mercy. That will depend on how they have lived their lives with the light they had to live by.

Remember Jesus was very keen to let the little children come to him – and said the kingdom of God belonged to “such as these”.

But it is vitally important to make Jesus known – to tell people about who he is and that the kingdom of God is near. That is God's heart and we should pray as well -

¹TI 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth

Our hope is secure if our names are in the book of life:

In the Fathers house there are many rooms – and there is one for us – probably enough for one each!

JN 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

We know this is true because God raised Jesus from the dead – we can have certainty about eternity.

Next week we will look at:

Where is this house?

What will we be doing for eternity?

What about rewards – will we get any?