

**“The Resurrection of the Dead”**  
**Hebrews 6:1 - 2; Luke 24:36 – 43;**  
**1 Corinthians 15:20 -24; 42 – 44; 51 – 54;**  
**Revelation 21:1 - 5**

We’ve been tracking our way through Hebrews 6 which talks about the elementary or primary teachings of being a follower of Jesus.

We’ve looked at faith – faith; faith in God is absolutely precious, more precious than gold.

And we talked about how our faith in God is put to the test and that not everyone passes the test.

However we know that God wants us to pass the test and so we looked ways our faith can be strengthened.

Baptisms.

Whatever muck or dirt or dung we have a God who can make us clean through what Jesus has done by the Holy Spirit.

Then last week we talked about what?

We talked about the laying on of hands which has to do with affirmation and commissioning, with impartation and with healing.

Last time I simply asked the question, what happens after you die?

That immaterial part of you that contains your character and soul that survived death is where?

Paradise.

Paradise is a place where you will be fully conscious.

It will be a place and a state of rest and refreshment, being held in the love of Christ in the presence of God.

It will be amazing!

However, amazing as it is, the best is still to come.

Paradise is not your final destination nor is it your final state.

It is intermediate life.

Ultimate life is to come.

So today we’re looking at **the resurrection of the dead.**



The resurrection of the dead is about life after life after death.

When Christians hear the phrase “the resurrection of the dead”, their minds can go to all sorts of places.

What comes to mind for you when think about the phrase “the resurrection of the dead”?

Here’s where I’m up to: as good as paradise will be, a significant part of who we are will be missing - our bodies.

In beginning, God made us as embodied, physical beings and in his sight, “It was very good”.<sup>1</sup>

Our bodies are essential to our personhood.

And spirits or souls can’t hug or hand shake or give high fives.

Without our bodies there is an aspect of us that is missing.

So as we heard in our readings this morning Pauls writes these words:

“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep.”<sup>2</sup>

‘Firstfruits’ means first of what is to come.

In other words Jesus is the first of many, a guarantee of what is to come.

What Jesus experienced, we too will experience.

Just as Jesus had a body so will we and it will be a new body.

In that sense He is *our* prototype.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:31

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20.

When Jesus rose from the dead he just appear to have a body; he had a very real, tangible existence.

Jesus spoke.

He said touch and see.

In fact he said to the disciples do ghosts or spirits have flesh and bones like I do?

He showed them his hands and feet.

And then what did he do?

He asked if they had something to eat.

So he ate some fish while they were watching.

Jesus was undoubtedly physically with them.

And yet this body was different.

Jesus was able appear instantaneously among the disciples in a locked room.

There was no sense that Jesus was inhibited or disabled by his previous injuries.

In his resurrection a transformation had taken place.

So we too will share in this resurrected life.

We're told:

“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”<sup>3</sup>

We will be given a body that is imperishable, full of wonder, full of power; in other words, a ***Spirit*** empowered body.

Just like Jesus there will be a new physicality.

You will be changed, transformed and new.

It actually says that we will have a likeness or resemblance to Jesus. <sup>4 5</sup>

Someone has put it like this:

At your death God will download your software – our conscious self, identity, and memories – onto His hardware until the time comes for God to download your software onto the new hardware that God will give us.

Now having said that, at this point people will ask, will I retain some of my distinctive features? Will I recognise others and will they recognise me?

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:42 - 44.

<sup>4</sup> “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will *transform* our lowly bodies so that they will be *like his glorious body*.”

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:49.

I have rather largish ears and a bit of a pointy nose, not overly but they're there.  
I have fair skin and freckles.

What do you think?  
How would you respond?

***“Will we retain our distinctive features and will we recognise people?”***

Here's where I'm up to - Yes.  
(And some of you are somewhat disappointed☺).  
As I've said already, when Jesus rose from the dead he had a body.  
But although Jesus had the body that he had - which was nailed scarred - in another sense there were times when he wasn't recognisable.

There were times when people didn't recognise Jesus like Mary who thought He was a gardener until he spoke...

It will be the same for us.  
Our bodies are will in part similar and in part dissimilar.  
There will continuity and discontinuity.  
There will be sense in which, at first, they'll be unrecognisable and at the same time a familiarity.

You'll look - and at least initially - I think that's so-and-so but is it?  
You'll see people and we'll go “That looks like Reece but is it??? I mean he wasn't too bad to look at previously but now...”  
(Others will, “Well, I'm surprised to see him here☺”).

The thing is: they'll be no vanity.  
They'll be no concern about, “Do I look good today?”, because you will all look good.

And they'll be no illness or injuries or disease.  
Weariness will no longer be factor.  
The limitations of this life will end.  
You'll be ageless.

The question then becomes ***Where?***

***“If we have new bodies, what space will they inhabit?”***

At this point a lot of people have this idea:



You know, a blue sky with fluffy clouds and white light.

One author wrote:

“Heaven is somewhere you believe in .... It’s a beautiful place where you can sit on soft clouds and talk to other people who are there. At night you can sit next to the stars which are the brightest of anywhere in the universe.

If you’re good throughout your life then you go to heaven when your life is finished here on earth, God sends angels down from heaven to take you up to Heaven with him.

Grandma is in the safest place. With the stars, with God and the angels, she is watching over us from up there.”<sup>6</sup>

What many of us have done, and what I did, is we have conflated “Heaven” and the resurrection of the dead into one idea.

**The Resurrection of the Dead**

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**“Going to Heaven when you die”**

They are not the same.

**The Resurrection of the Dead**

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**~~“Going to Heaven when you die”~~**

Yes, there is paradise but paradise is not in the clouds either.

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<sup>6</sup> Maria Shriver, *What’s Heaven?* (New York: St Martin’s press, 1999.)

So if it's not in the clouds, where will we be?  
Well, here.

We read in Revelation that there is "a new heaven and a new earth..."  
"And the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, *coming down* out of heaven from God.

In others words, heaven, where God is and Earth, will become one.  
They will be joined.  
The earth will transformed and transfigured into a heavenly existence.  
Heaven will not swallow up the earth and neither will the earth absorb heaven.  
You'll have a heavenly earth and an earthly heaven.

And best of all,  
"God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." (Revelation 20:3)

The Kingdom of God will be on earth as it is in heaven.  
God's rule and reign will extend out into every place of the planet.

What that will mean is that the earth will be cleansed and it will purged and it will be washed and it will be made new.

No more pandemics.  
No more lockdowns.  
No more wild fires.  
No more devastating floods.  
No extinctions.  
No more poverty.  
No more homelessness.  
No more armed conflicts and war.  
No more senseless tragedies.  
No death, no dying.

"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 20:4)

And there will be a judgement; there will be a holding to account.

By the way, the attachments we have to this natural world will either carry over into the next in a greater way or be overtaken by the new.  
I mean, creation will be enhanced.

And what will we be doing?

Someone has said, it will be like a Sunday morning service that never comes to an end.

So of course some people, that sounds like hell 😊.

I think there will be work to do - but without the drudgery and boredom that sometimes comes with work in this age.

You will do stuff that you enjoy.

You will have full job satisfaction.

And all gifts and talents and abilities you have will be advanced.

All of this is a gift that Jesus will have for us.

We will lose a track of time.

Think about how your time is spent now.

Do you want to know how much time is spent doing what?

(Too bad if you don't 😊).

If you live to be 70 years old, on average this is how you're going to spend your life:

- You are going to spend 20 years & 3 months asleep.
- 10 years & 5 months watching TV
- Mobile devices at current usage? 8 years and  $\frac{3}{4}$  years
- 7 years and 6 months eating and drinking
- 5 years and 9 months in transportation
- 18 months waiting in line at a store check-out
- 6 months waiting at red lights
- You'll only spend 303 days in church services

If you have wondered where your life has gone, there you go.

In the age to come, it'll be like those times when you been in deep conversation with a good friend, or you're at a party and you look at your watch, and you think, "Where has the time gone?"

It will be like we will always be in the moment and every moment will even better than the last.

The final question this morning is ***When?***

When someone says, “When?”, we’re not talking about date setting. If there’s one thing that all date setters have in common, is that they are wrong.

Did you know that a bestselling book in 1988 was “88 Reasons why Jesus will return in 1988”? True story. 4.5 million(!) copies were sold. When Jesus didn’t return, there were 3 more books released. You can still purchase them on Amazon if you would like...

So when will the resurrection of the dead happen; is there a sequence? Well, again, what does the Scripture say?

Again First Corinthians 15 verse 23 we read:

“Christ, the firstfruits; then, *when he comes*, those who belong to him. Then the end will come...”

Then in verse 51:

“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - 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.”

In Philippians 3 Pauls says the same thing:

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour *from* there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”

At his return is when we will receive our new bodies.

And by the way, that’s all of us who are Christians - we will all be changed, whether alive or dead.

And by Christian, there is a definition.

A Christian is someone who has yielded their life to Him as King, and their relationship with Jesus is marked by connection and obedience.

So to close, as I said last week, there are people in our world today who are terrified at the prospect of their death.

There are!

I mean heard and watched a professional athlete in his prime, who had Covid, a mild case, who was weeping in absolute fear.

No only that but there in fact an increasing nihilism and hopelessness. People in the West are faced with their mortality like never before.

We are bearers of good news about this area, the best news there is. We know Jesus.

Not only that but it's actually world affirming.

Our planet, in case you haven't noticed, has issues.

Despite our best efforts - *which are good and right* - will not be good enough in the end.

And as much as we care about the planet and the people on this planet there is Someone who cares about them infinitely more.

Every generation of Christians have believed they were the last.

That may be the case or not.

We are be those who live in the now with eye to what is to come.

So we've covered a lot of ground this morning, so tell the person next to what stood for you.