

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 28 SEPTEMBER 2020 – 4 OCTOBER 2020



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

The resurrection of Jesus is at the centre of the gospel. It is there we see God's victory over sin, evil, and death itself. But sometimes we can think only one aspect or the implication of Jesus's resurrection, and miss out on so much encouragement we should have.

One such mistake is to think of Jesus's resurrection as the proof of God's existence only. An honest historical research always runs into the resurrection of Jesus as something not only plausible but probable (unless someone's presupposition precludes miracles). And people can be encouraged to think about God and take Jesus' claims seriously. But the resurrection of Jesus is more than this.

Another mistake is to think of Jesus's resurrection as merely a proof that the perfect sacrifice has been made. Christians believe that we are all sinners, but Jesus died for our sins, so we may be forgiven and be saved. But we also believe that, not only Christ's death, but His resurrection is crucial for our salvation. We believe that unless Christ rose again, we do not have forgiveness still (1 Cor 15:17). It is an oft-forgotten but fundamentally important article of our faith, that Christ died for our sins and rose again (1 Cor 15:3-4). Yet, the resurrection of Jesus is still more than this.

Christ's resurrection means the end time has begun. God has been teaching His people in the Old Testament that one day He will bring the whole world to an end (or a new beginning, depending on how you look at it!). And God has taught that at the end, God would raise people up from the dead (resurrection) and He would judge them for how they lived. Christ's resurrection signalled that this Last Day has begun. We are not living in the same "day" (or era, if you like) as the Old Testament believers. The End really is near, although we need to remember that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8) So we live with this final moment in sight when Christ will return. We are to make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel with others (Col 4:5) and travel lightly as we journey on in this life. And even still, the resurrection of Jesus means more than this to us.

Christians' hope in the resurrection of Jesus is not merely knowing that God exists. It is not even that God forgives our sins so we do not fall under His judgment, though it is crucial to know and believe this. Christ's resurrection teaches us more than knowing the time (the Last Days) we live in so we can live wisely, though it is critical to know and believe this in order to please God.

What we must also remember from the resurrection of Jesus is that we ourselves will have the glorious body like His when we are resurrected. And our greatest future hope is that we will dwell with the risen Lord Jesus forever, enjoying His unending love and grace as we live spotlessly with our resurrected bodies.

In this limited space, I have not exhausted the blessings we receive because of Christ's resurrection, but I hope this helps you appreciate God's abounding grace in Christ more as we meditate on Christ's resurrection this week.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM¹

Lord's Day 22

Q57) How does “the resurrection of the body” comfort you?

A) Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body.

Q58) How does the article concerning “life everlasting” comfort you?

A) Even as I already now experience in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, so after this life, I will have perfect blessedness such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart has ever imagined: a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.

1 COR 15:53–55

53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The Christian hope for the future is not limited to a part of us, the soul/spirit. God made us as bodily souls. The tragedy of death is that we lose our body, even if we immediately experience Christ's presence in our soul/spirit. But we are meant to have our bodies, the physical part of ourselves is not something more or less important than the spiritual part. We are physical beings as much as we are spiritual beings. The great future for Christians is that we will re-gain our physical body when Christ returns. And that body will in fact be a transformed, glorious body like Christ's after His resurrection. We will still be us and not someone else, yet, death, decay, and pain will no longer be a threat to us then. What a magnificent future God has promised for us!

JOHN 17:3

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Avoiding the eternal condemnation, that is Hell, is not Christians' greatest hope for the future. We hope for heaven. But even more than that, we hope for the resurrection where we will live on earth, though it will be totally cleansed and forever transformed, that we could call it properly heaven on earth. We look forward to the complete reversal of injuries and dysfunction we sustained in our bodies. We will be free from any diseases or pain we experienced in this life. No more sighs or tears! And yet, this picture is still not the greatest hope for Christians. Our greatest hope is to see Christ face to face and forever praise Him with all that we are, including our physical bodies, therefore the resurrection is necessary. The eternal life we will enjoy will be great and wonderful because we will know God increasingly like never before.

¹ The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.