

Paul has made the case for resurrection, based upon the reality and truth of Christ's own resurrection. He pointed to the futility of Christian belief, suffering, hardship and persecution while in the body, if there were no bodily resurrection of believers. He has presented the witness of living things growing from planted seeds each after its own kind, to resurrection. He cites the variety of life forms and of even inanimate objects to illustrate the idea of the new form our bodies will take on in resurrection.

Now he reveals a mystery, a secret. We shall not all die! Those who are alive when Christ raises the believers from the graves will be changed. Suddenly! In an instant! In a twinkling of an eye. Not even a blink! The dead (asleep) in Christ will rise first, changed, incorruptible. Then we will be changed, also incorruptible, like them. Their departed souls will return to their bodies and not find them as they had left them, corruptible (subject to disease injury and aging) and mortal (dying). They will return to changed bodies. Still, their bodies! Not some new body made from scratch, but changed bodies, transformed, (metamorphosed) grandly different from our earthy bodies, a heavenly body. God has given us a wonderful illustration of this in creation. The squishy, creeping, gobbling caterpillar's change into a beautiful, graceful, flighty butterfly. The chrysalis is like the grave. When the butterfly emerges it doesn't leave behind a caterpillar body. It hasn't formed a new body by taking in materials from without. No! Its caterpillar body is changed, transformed into a new glorious form, quite unlike the old form, yet of it and from it. God doesn't dispose of our earthy bodies and create entirely new ones. He changes the earthy body into a heavenly.

Why is this point of truth so important to believe and hold? Because Christ's death on the cross otherwise would be declared to be inadequate to conquer death and to raise and change the dead. Death introduced by Adam's sin is not defeated if believers are not raised and changed. God could just have given us entirely new bodies and left the old ones in the grave. And the bodies of those of us who are alive when Christ comes for us He could have left behind as carcasses lying wherever we left them. But that is no different from what He does when we die. No, He changes us in-place. We instantly disappear from the face of the earth as Christ did from the tomb. Hear the angels at the tomb after rolling away the stone. He is not here! He is risen. They didn't roll it away to let Him out. He had risen and left it already. They rolled away the stone to reveal that He was indeed gone. And they declared that to be so.

Many imaginative stories have been written depicting what it will be like for those left behind.

There will certainly be no chance to trust Christ within this instant. Others won't see us going. They will just not see us any more. They may search for us as those who sought Enoch, Hebrews 11:5, or Elijah, 2Kings 2:11-17, but will not find us. Will God open the graves to display that they are empty, as He did with Christ's resurrection? He could, but probably won't. What will happen to our belongings? Who cares!!! Love not the world..., 1John 2:15-17. Remember Lot's wife, Luke 17:32! We can't take it with us. 1Timothy 6:6-8. Why not start letting go now?

What will happen to little babies and children of believers who go? They will go with us.

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. 11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Will the earth be without any children at this point? Perhaps, but probably not. The children of the unsaved, will probably remain to go through the impending tribulation with their left-behind parents. At least there will be babies born, and on the way, in the middle of the seven year Tribulation forecast by the Lord.

Matthew 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (also Luke 23:29)

If they die then, they will go to heaven. If they have grown older and reject the witness of the coming King, they will be judged when He comes as will others who reject Him. If they are still very young when He returns, they will enter the kingdom and enjoy the blessings of the thousand year reign of the King. Whatever the case "will not the judge of all the earth do right?"

Death is swallowed (gulped down) up in victory! Our bodies will not be left behind on the earth or in the grave! Paul breaks forth in a shout of praise. Join him in anticipation. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades), where is thy victory?"

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. 9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

How this changes our attitude toward the prospect of death, our own or that of loved ones who are the Lord's.

We are said to sleep! The Christ's term for the death of a believer is "sleep". The sting of death is gone. We do not, should not, fear death.

See John 14:1-3; 2Corinthians 5:1-8; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20-21, and other scriptures for more details, to complete the picture. They provide additional insights, and comfort regarding the most momentous event awaiting every believer, **DEATH!** (and eventual **RESURRECTION**), *or*, sudden **RAPTURE** without death. Believe! Be ready! Be waiting! Be watching! Be serving!

1Thessalonians 1:19-10 ...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Some Muslims are willing to perform suicide bombings based upon promises that prey upon their lusts. These promises are not only degraded but false. They awake in hades. Their zeal, devotion, their faith in their religious beliefs and devotion are remarkable but mistaken and futile. God's promises are pure, glorious, and best of all, true. Knowing them motivates and encourages us to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Steadfast: sedentary, settled, moral fixity, firm.

Unmovable: immovable, firm, unremovable.

Always: everywhere and at all times.

Abounding: super-abounding, exceeding, excelling,, busily occupied.

Work of the Lord: employment, enterprise, labor, effort, acts.

Labor: toils, working to weariness, pains.

Vain: empty, fruitless, futile.

Hang in there! Don't budge! Stand fast, but work hard! Get on with it! Don't spare anything! We're getting new bodies so we can go ahead and wear these bodies out **for the Lord**. Paul did, ch 9. Let nothing stop us, weaken us or divert us! Over the top! After all, **the glory shines before us!**

Philippians 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)

By Ron Canner, February 18, 2004