

Devotion for Easter Tuesday - 2 April 2013, Anno Domini



Easter Tuesday

The Collect

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who celebrate with reverence the Paschal feast, may be found worthy to attain to everlasting joys; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Easter Sunday

The Collect

ALmighty God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

The Second Lesson

I Thessalonians 4:13

BUT I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

What is real and authentic death? It depends on your definition of death. The definition the coroner uses to define death is a significant variance with the definition Christ gives it. The coroner pronounces death when all bodily functions have ceased and sensible attributes of the brain have flat-lined. Truly, it is at this point that the body no longer lives; but is the body the essence of the person that God has created in His own image? What is the image of God? Have you wondered? An image is not the original, but a perfect likeness in certain characteristics. The superscription and image on the Roman penny shown to Christ (Matt 22:19-21) was that of Caesar, but that image, like a dead body, had no life. Can the image of God ever be represented by something that is not alive? The essence of God's Being is Spirit. Jesus told the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well: ***God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*** (John 4:24) If we are born again, we will have a spirit of love and truth that emulates the Spirit of God. The sinless image in which man was created in the Garden has been marred by sin and no longer resembles God because God cannot sin. So what is it of the whole man that resembles God? It is the Spirit of God in the heart of man that gives him life eternal.

So physical death comes to all, and the body disintegrates into the elements of the earth over the dusty years of centuries. What made the body live at its beginning? It was God who gave the body spirit. That spirit does not die, but returns to God who gave it at the moment of death. ***Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*** (Eccl 12:7) If that spirit has been sold off by its temporary possessor, it will not remain with God, but will go to the grave to await its final disposition in Hell. (see the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31).

The one part of the Person that is eternal is that which resembles God – the spirit. If that spirit is reconciled to God, then it will NEVER die! You will remember how Jesus describes the death of the saints: ***Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.***

(Matt 9:24) ***Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*** (John 11:11) Lazarus had been dead FOUR days and was not sleeping according to the nature of the flesh, but was only sleeping according to the power of the Spirit of God. Do you believe that Christ, being raised from the dead, can die anew? Do you believe that any part of Christ can die? If you, my friend, are in Christ, is it possible for you to die therein? Not at all, for Christ is the Savior of the living and not the dead. ***I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*** (Matt 22:32) Surely, the worldly scribe will account Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long dead, but not in the annals of Heaven. All who die (physically) in Christ live on forever in His Kingdom. Death is but a paper thin moment of time. Once one pierces a sheet of paper it is immediately open to the other side. The same with death. ***Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*** (1 Cor 15:51-52) I believe these bodies will be reconstituted in perfection over that weak and tired body which wasted away in the grave. Remember this: God is ABLE!

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. Sleep was also Paul's definition of death for the saint. All who sleep in Christ shall be WITH

Christ.

Do we not find immense comfort in this understanding of the Word? *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

I have, over the past week, lost two loved ones to that sleep in Christ – my elder sister whom I dearly loved, and my favorite uncle – six days apart. I must admit, there was little mourning over their departure. We must celebrate the newness of life that has been granted our loved ones in Christ who pass from THIS life and enter upon the threshold of Eternal Life! This is why Christ died for our sins – to enable us to receive Him into our hearts and have Him abide with us forever. But even more importantly, this is why Jesus rose from the dead – that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. We may miss our loved ones gone on before, but it is our sorrow alone and not theirs.

I once read a story of a dear Christian lady who, when her husband was absent, lost both her children to cholera. She laid them out with a mother's tenderness, spread a sheet over them, and waited for her husband's return. "A wealthy Person loaned me some exquisite jewels," she told her husband on his return. "and He now wants to have them back. What shall I do?" "Return them, by all means," said the husband. Then she led the way, and silently uncovered the forms of her children (asleep in Christ).

Can you know this comfort of dismissing the horrors of death – your own and that of your beloveds? If you believe, you (and they) shall never die!