

## **A. Our resurrection hope: heaven on earth (part 2)**

What happens between my death and the general resurrection of the dead that is linked to the return of Jesus?

Is a person composed of two parts – body and soul – the traditional view, or is a person just a single entity that cannot be separated into body and soul?

The monist view assumes that a person cannot exist without a body.

Some monists suggest that you experience an immediate resurrection.

Some monists argue that at death we become extinct, only to be recreated at the general resurrection of the dead.

There is a period of conscious existence between an individual's death and the general resurrection.

The **Heidelberg Catechism** of AD 1563 asks the question, "How does "the resurrection of the body" comfort you?" The answer is: "

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

The **Westminster Confession of Faith** of AD 1647 , chapter 23 states:

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God

who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

There are two destinies immediately after death.

<sup>9</sup> Sheol below is eager to greet your coming, stirring up the spirits of the departed for you — all the rulers of the earth — making all the kings of the nations rise from their thrones.

<sup>10</sup> They all respond to you, saying, “You too have become as weak as we are; you have become like us!

<sup>11</sup> Your splendor has been brought down to Sheol, along with the music of your harps. Maggots are spread out under you, and worms cover you.” ((Isaiah 14:9-11 CSB)

<sup>16</sup> Those who see you will stare at you; they will look closely at you: “Is this the man who caused the earth to tremble, who shook the kingdoms,

<sup>17</sup> who turned the world into a wilderness, who destroyed its cities and would not release the prisoners to return home?” (Isaiah 14:12-17 CSB)

If only the wicked go to Sheol, what of the righteous?

<sup>13</sup> This is the way of those who are arrogant,  
and of their followers,  
who approve of their words.

<sup>14</sup> Like sheep they are headed for Sheol;  
Death will shepherd them.  
The upright will rule over them in the morning,  
and their form will waste away in Sheol,  
far from their lofty abode. (Psalm 49:13-14)

But God will redeem my life  
from the power of Sheol,  
for He will take me. (Psalm 49:15)

<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine  
linen and lived in luxury every day. <sup>20</sup> At his gate was laid a  
beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores <sup>21</sup> and longing to  
eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came  
and licked his sores.

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried  
him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was  
buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up  
and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. <sup>24</sup> So he  
called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send  
Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my  
tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ (Luke 16:19-24)

“Someday they’ll tell you that Moody’s dead. Don’t believe it.  
That day I’ll be before the throne; I’ll be more alive than I’ve  
ever been.” (D.L. Moody)

Going to ‘heaven above’ is not the end of the story; ultimately, we  
await ‘heaven on earth’.

Focusing on the life to come can be a source of strength when we  
face great challenges.

'I have always thought, and said openly, that being a believer makes it easier to live your life, and to an even greater extent, engage in opposition politics... you lie on your bunk looking up at the one above and ask yourself whether you are a Christian in your heart of hearts... are you a disciple of the religion whose founder sacrificed himself for others, paying the price for their sins? Do you believe in the immortality of the soul and the rest of the cool stuff? If you can honestly answer yes, what is there left for you to worry about...? Don't worry about the morrow, because the morrow is perfectly capable of taking care of itself. (Alexei Navalny)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed (Rom. 8:19).

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.<sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22-23 NIV)

The Old Testament prophets speak optimistically of a new earth and new heavens.

The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus,<sup>2</sup> it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the Lord,  
the splendour of our God. (Isaiah 35:1-2)

<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy. Isaiah 35:1-2)

<sup>8</sup> And a highway will be there;  
it will be called the Way of Holiness;  
it will be for those who walk on that Way.  
The unclean will not journey on it;  
wicked fools will not go about on it.

<sup>9</sup> No lion will be there,  
nor any ravenous beast;  
they will not be found there.  
But only the redeemed will walk there,  
<sup>10</sup> and those the Lord has rescued will return.

They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isaiah 35:8-10 NIV)

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16–18)

The Puritan John Owen wrote, “Nothing is more useful [in enduring trials] than contemplations of eternal things and future glory.”

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,<sup>20</sup> but

lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.  
<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”  
(Matt 6:19-21).

Jesus did not instruct his disciples to pray, “Take me to heaven,” but rather, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

Jesus Christ calls his followers to be kingdom-builders here and now.

Christ will return to address every injustice as universal judge, vindicating and punishing as appropriate.

With the defeat of evil, God will establish his eternal city on a renewed earth.

“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands - dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.”

And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before. (C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2004, pp. 766-767).