



Death & Resurrection:

Bodies, Souls, & Christian Hope

Schedule



- Today: Addressing the Confusion
- January 31: The Resurrection of Christ.
- February 7: Scriptural Understanding of Souls and Resurrection Hope.
- February 14: The Kingdom of God Now... and finally.
- February 21: The Christian Funeral

Review

What do you remember?

What Questions do you have?

Why teach this class:

1. What Christians in America believe about Life after death is a **confusing mess** drawing from multiple belief systems.
2. What we believe about what happens in death affects how we live in this world.
3. Scripture provides some helpful and hopeful clarity in what we ought to believe.
4. By not teaching we perpetuate the problem.
5. Our Neighbors demand it. (cannot invite with an anti-intellectual faith)

Why the confusion?

Complex answer

1. Pastoral Problem
2. Challenge of a Multi-faith world
3. Historical theological challenges
4. Cultural Christianity has adopted from many sources

What do we confess?

- Nicene Creed

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

We do not say: *“We look forward to going to heaven.”*

Our Ultimate Destiny

In the New Testament, “going to heaven” when we die is *not our ultimate destiny*.

Our destiny is to be “bodily raised into the transformed, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ” (For all the Saints, 21) and live in a new or transformed Creation, the “New Jerusalem,” where God will reign.

“Going to heaven” is just the *first of two* stages – and the far less important stage – that we go through after death.

TODAY: The Resurrection of Christ

A starting point:

1. The rejection of Platonistic Dualism
 - Bodies and souls being independent entities
 - Bodies exemplifying that which is bad/corrupt
 - Souls exemplifying that which is good/immortal
2. The Radicality of the Gospel witness.
 - Bible Study and the assurance of Faith.
3. Introduce some of the implications of Christ's Bodily Resurrection.
 - Ascension
 - Holy Communion

The Soul

- Platonic Body/Soul Dualism
 - Platonism taught that Human Beings are dualistic creatures which have:
 - 1. A Material Body, which is mortal
 - 2. A Soul, which is immortal and part of the true, transcendent, divine world.
 - The problem we face is that our immortal souls have descended from the divine realm and have become trapped in our mortal bodies.

The Soul...

Greek word *psyche* = life, soul;

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,

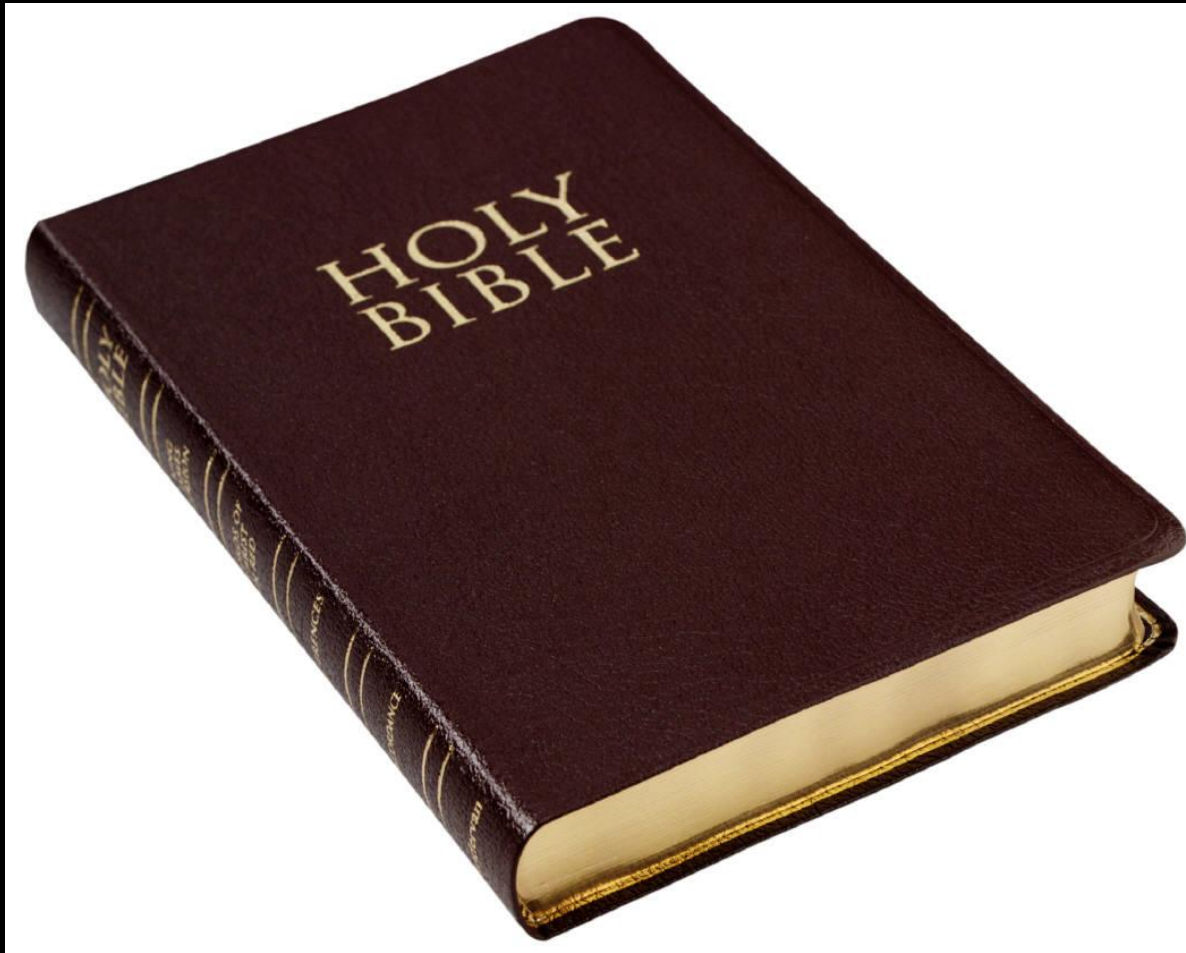
Luke 12:19 And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'

Hebrew word *Nephesh* = soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, and passion

Lamentations 3:20 My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.

The word *psyche* seems (in the New Testament) to refer, like the Hebrew *nephesh*, not a disembodied inner part of the human being but to what we might call the person or even the personality. (Surprised by Hope, 152)

Bible Study



1 Corinthians 15:3-23

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ...

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ-- whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Jesus' Resurrection/Our Resurrection

Why talk about Jesus' Resurrection?

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

The Resurrection of Christ

Did Jesus actually die?

Other options:

1. Resuscitation
2. Not actually Jesus who died (ISLAM)
3. Just the body died... spirit/soul lived on... that is what we see.
4. Yes, he died – and the disciples moved the body then made up a fantastic story.

Luke 23:26 ²⁶ As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Luke 23:32-33 ³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

Witness of the Soldiers

- John 19:31-34 ³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.
- ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.
- ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

Witness of the Women

Mark 15:37-41 ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ... ⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

Was he Resurrected?

Could it all be a made up story?

- N.T. Wright lists four strange elements of the story that refute this:
 1. Strange Silence of the Bible in the stories.
 - No “according to the scriptures” in relation to resurrection.
 2. Women as the principal witnesses.
 3. Never mention the feature of Christian Hope
 4. Portrait of Jesus himself.
 - Not portrayed as a bright shining star (Daniel) or some other biblical reference.

No Mention of Christian Hope in the Gospels

- No: “Jesus is raised therefore we will go to heaven when we die.”
- No: “Jesus is raised therefore we will be raised from the sleep of death.”
- Instead the message is: Jesus is raised, so he is the Messiah, and therefore he is the world’s true Lord; Jesus is raised so God’s new creation has begun – and we his followers, have a job to do!

The Portrait of Jesus

Jesus appears as a human being with a body that is in some ways quite normal and can be mistaken for a gardener (John 20) or a fellow traveler on the road (Luke 24).

Yet the stories also contain- and this marks them out as the most mysterious stories ever written – definite signs that this body has been transformed. It is clearly physical: it uses up (so to speak) the matter of the crucified body; hence the empty tomb. But, equally, it comes and goes through locked doors; it is not always recognized, and in the end it disappears into God's space, that is "heaven" through the thin curtain that in much Jewish thought separates God's space from human space.

The Resurrection of Christ

“We could cope – the world could cope – with a Jesus who ultimately remains a wonderful idea inside his disciples minds and hearts. The world cannot cope with a Jesus who comes out of the tomb, who inaugurates God’s new creation right in the middle of the old one.”
(Surprised by Hope, 68)

Dead People do NOT Live again...

John 20:24-28

- ²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."
- ²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

N.T. Wright Explains

“Thomas, like a good historian, wants to see and touch. Jesus presents himself to his sight and invites him to touch, but Thomas doesn’t. He transcends the type of knowing he had intended to use and passes into a higher richer one.”

“What I am suggesting is that faith in Jesus risen from the dead transcends but includes what we call history and what we call science.”

“This kind of faith, which like all modes of knowledge is defined by the nature of its object, is faith in the Creator God, the God who promised to put all things to rights at the last, the God who raised Jesus from the dead within history, leaving evidence that demands an explanation from the scientist as well as anybody else.”

“As I understand the scientific method, when something turns up that doesn’t fit the paradigm you’re working with, one option at least, perhaps when all others have failed, is to change the paradigm – not to exclude everything you’ve known to that point but to include it within the larger whole.” (Surprised by Hope, 71-72)

The Good News

That we:

1. Have been forgiven our sins by Jesus' death on the cross,
2. Are freed from sin at our death,
3. Will live with Christ after our death,
4. Will someday be resurrected as Christ was resurrected,
5. We can trust God the Father to do all this for us.

How does this work for us...

Cambridge physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne offered a contemporary way of saying what needs to be said:

“God will download our software onto his hardware, until the day comes when he gives us new hardware on which to run our own software once more.” (Wright, For all the saints, 72)

Heaven... the intermediate state.

John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

Introduction to Next Week

Some things to consider:

Jesus was raised from the dead in a new and imperishable body.

Jesus is still embodied – more solidly embodied than we are – but generally absent from this present world.

The Ascension

The mystery of the Ascension is just that, a mystery.

Some things we can say:

- The Ancients were not locked into a 3 tier thinking about the universe.
- When you “move up” in the company does it mean you are changing floors?
- Jesus Ascended (moved up) to the Right Hand of the Father.
- Jesus maintained his new embodied form.

The Ascension

“What we are encouraged to grasp precisely through the ascension itself is that God’s space and ours – heaven and earth, in other words- are, though very different, not far away from one another.”

“God’s space and ours interlock and intersect in a whole variety of way even while they retain, for the moment at least, their separate and distinct identities and roles.” (Surprised by Hope, 116)

Holy Communion

Jesus has a physical body – ordinary elements

This is my BODY given FOR YOU!

What does this mean?

Could God actually encounter us, forgive us –
touch us?

Mention salvation, and almost all Western Christians assume that you mean going to heaven when you die. But a moment's thought, in the light of all that we have said so far, reveals that simply cannot be right.

Salvation means, of course, rescue. But what are we ultimately to be rescued from? The obvious answer is death. But, if when we die, all that happens is that our bodies decompose while our souls (or whatever other word we want to use for our continued existence) go on elsewhere, this doesn't mean we've been rescued from death. It simply means we've died.
(Surprised by Hope, 194)

For Next Week

What does it mean to be rescued from death?

What does it mean for Christ to take us to himself?

How do the Resurrection and Ascension impact our life of faith and our worship life?

What does it mean for the world to be redeemed?

Christian Humility & Christian Hope

As Niebuhr put it:

It is therefore important to maintain a decent measure of restraint in expressing the Christian hope. Faith must admit “that it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” But it is equally important not to confuse such restraint with uncertainty about the validity of the hope that “when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (Long, 56)

1 John 3:2 ² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.