

At the Sound of the Last Trumpet. No Nineteen

What is our final hope? Although I have provided some glimpses of the blessed state of the saints of God in heaven, we must remember that heaven is not their permanent residence. The knowledge of the intermediate state is of great comfort; but it can never be separated from the Biblical teaching on the resurrection of the body and the renewal of the earth. After death the spirit of the child of God is with the Lord. The body of the believer is buried, awaiting the resurrection. The body is as important as the spirit. When at the last day the dead will be raised, they will be reunited with their bodies. The heavenly home will be no more. The saints will inherit the earth. The new Jerusalem will descend from heaven. Heaven and earth will be reunited. The resurrection on the last day of history is the hope of the Church. From the very beginning of the early church, converts to Christ did not only turn from idols to serve the living and true God, but also lifted up their eyes in hope "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath"(1 Thess.1: 10). All human beings - body and soul -have been subjected to the power of sin and death. When Jesus Christ saved us, He saved us body and soul. Unlike eastern religions and Western mysticism, the Bible does not despise the body. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made"(Ps.119: 14). What then is our only comfort in life and in death? "That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faith Savior Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Cat.q.a.1). Therefore, we look eagerly forward to the return of our Saviour, "the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil.3: 21).

From the very beginning of the early Church, the belief in the resurrection was ridiculed. When in his Areopagus speech in Athens Paul proclaimed the resurrection from the dead, some sneered (Acts 17:32), When the Gospel was proclaimed for the first time among the pagans in Lyons, the greatest offense was the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead. They captured the Christians and burned them. They then threw the ashes of those charred bodies to the four winds, saying, "Let's see whether the God of those Christians can raise their bodies again!" The mockers may scorn; but when Christ returns, He will give us a new body (1Cor.15:50ff.). Death will be forced to surrender to Christ even the bodies he has held in his grip. The resurrection will be announced by "the last trumpet." Writing to the church in Thessalonica, Paul mentions that the ascended Christ "will come done from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise..."(1Thess.4:16). At the last reveille, there will be the miracle of the resurrection.