

**THE CROSS - THE RESURRECTION OF OUR BODIES - AND WHAT HAPPENS TO CHRISTIANS
30 SECONDS AFTER THEY DIE**

Easter Sunday, April 5th, 2026 - 10:00 a.m.

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IPAD TEXTS - 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 - “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.”

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

What wonderful joy and hope this should inspire in our hearts! What confidence in trial and tribulation! These words tie the certainty of **future** events to the **past** accomplishments of the cross and resurrection. Jesus had all of these future accomplishments of His death already in His mind when He spoke the words **“It is finished”** on the cross. From heaven’s perspective, these works yet to be revealed in our **future** are already **past** victories in terms of their completion.

The two accomplishments of Christ’s passion we’re considering are staggering in their power and benefit. They ensure our future, and without a **future** there is no ultimate meaning to the **present**. So these two blessings of the passion define **who we are** because they define **where we are going**.

The New Testament says **two things** about our accomplished redemption through the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross **secures our presence with Christ immediately upon our death**. And **the cross of Christ secures the resurrection of our bodies from the grave when Christ Jesus comes again**. It is because of these two accomplishments of Christ’s passion that everything you do in this church service matters forever.

1) **JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS TO SECURE OUR PRESENCE WITH HIM IMMEDIATELY
UPON OUR DEATH**

IPAD TEXT - 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 - “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.”

Make your lips say the important words of these verses carefully. Paul speaks very specifically of a cause and effect relationship. Jesus Christ died **“so that whether we are awake or”**

asleep, we might live with Him.” In other words, one of the key purposes to Christ’s passion was to cause us to know Him and be with Him, whether we are ***awake*** (alive and breathing here on this earth) or whether we are ***asleep*** (that is, our bodies are six feet under the ground in the Newmarket cemetery.)

These are truly powerful words. Our ***relationship*** with Jesus isn’t changed by our physical death. The fact that my body lies in the grave (***asleep***) doesn’t change Christ’s love for me, ***nor*** my love for Him.

“But how do you ***know*** this Pastor Don? How do you know we don’t just go into some kind of ***soul-sleep*** until Jesus comes again? How do you know that there is something ***living*** and ***conscious*** in our relationship with Jesus immediately upon our death?”

I need to back up a bit at this point. I said earlier that redemption through the work of Christ guarantees that our relationship with Jesus isn’t changed by the event of our physical death. That isn’t quite true. But it isn’t untrue in the sense that it is a lie. It is untrue in the sense that it doesn’t do justice to the full glory of what Christ’s passion accomplished.

Actually, your relationship with Jesus ***is*** changed immediately upon your death. But you’ll only ***understand*** the change if you look at some wonderful texts very carefully:

IPAD TEXT - 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 - “For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2] For *in this tent we groan*, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, [3] if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. [4] For while we are still in this tent, *we groan*, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

This is Paul’s description of life in these earthly bodies. They wear out. Twice Paul describes life in our physical bodies as a period of ***“groaning.”*** We all know we’re going to die. We all know we’re aging. True, there are many wonderful blessings - many pleasant and enjoyable things God does for us while we’re here on earth. But we long, all of us, even those who couldn’t articulate the longing, for our eternal state, clothed with resurrection bodies. In truth,

this is actually *all* we truly long for, if we only knew it.

So that's the first thing to remember if you want to see the change death makes to the believer. Life in these earthly bodies right now is a time of "**groaning**." But there's more, much more:

IPAD TEXT - Philippians 1:21-24 - "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. [22] If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. [23] I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. [24] But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account."

This passage is more unique than Christians frequently realize. It's perhaps the one place in the New Testament that tells us something specific about the time **between** our funeral and the Second Coming of Jesus. The comparison Paul is making is between living on this earth "**in the flesh**" (24), and being "**with Christ**" upon the moment of his death. The important point to note is **in no place in this passage is Paul discussing the ultimate joy and final state of Christians united with Jesus at the close of time in resurrection bodies.**

But, says Paul, death still brings a change - an **immediate** change. Even that temporary condition of being "**absent from the body**" is, for the Christian, a great "**gain**" over life in this world as we know it. This is not **soul-sleep** or some vague, unconscious existence. This, says Paul, will be a time of heightened enjoyment and awareness of Jesus. In other words, whatever is the **best** of your life right now in earth, it will be **better** when you die and your spirit goes to be with Christ. If it isn't better it isn't gain. And Paul says it **is** gain.

We don't know **everything** about this intermediate state. In fact, if truth be told, we don't know all that much. The Bible doesn't really dwell on this state in detail because it is only a **temporary** condition. But we **do** know that it is a time of great **gain** for the Christian. And we **do** know that this blessing was bestowed for us through the death of Christ on the cross - **1 Thessalonians 5:10** - "**....who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.**" - IPAD TEXT

There is still another blessing secured for us by the passion of Christ - a blessing even greater than dying and finding gain in Christ Jesus:

2) **JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS TO SECURE OUR RESURRECTION FROM THE GRAVES
IN WHICH WE WERE BURIED**

There are no better words to read on an Easter Sunday morning than these - **Revelation 1:17b-18** - "...I am the first and the last, [18] and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and **I have the keys of Death and Hades.**" - IPAD TEXT

The idea here is ***the keys of death were always hung on the inside of Christ's tomb.*** Jesus' death on our behalf took Him into the tomb where the keys were hung. In His Resurrection He brought the keys out with Him.

This explains a very profound truth. This explains how while Jesus could raise several people from the dead during His earthly ministry, they would all ***die*** again. I say it reverently, but even Jesus couldn't bestow ***eternal*** life until ***after*** His conquered death through His own death (the Bible says He "***tasted death***" for every one of us) and after His own resurrection from the grave. It's ***after*** He died and rose for us that He held the ***keys*** of death and the grave.

This is the idea Paul picks up on in our opening Romans text - **Romans 6:5** - "**For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.**" - IPAD TEXT

If Jesus didn't have the keys of death then His death and resurrection are only ***His*** experience. But because He now holds the keys, His death and resurrection have become ***our*** experience too. Jesus takes us ***with*** Him - ***all the way*** with Him - and Jesus' body didn't stay in the grave!

This is not wishful thinking. It is not the private interpretation of a small bunch of religious fanatics. The New Testament ***rings*** with this wonderful truth:

IPAD TEXT - 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 - "**For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. [15] For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are **left until the coming of the Lord,** will not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16] For**

the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

IPAD TEXT - 1 Corinthians 6:14 - “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.”

Both of these texts are great “**body**” texts. The subject isn’t just eternal life. The subject is the future life of our resurrected bodies. Paul’s logic is irresistible and heart-pounding. God can no more leave our bodies in the grave than He left Jesus’ body in the grave. Jesus came out with the **keys** of death in His clenched fist.

The sting of death has been removed in Christ’s passion. My sin, for which eternal death is the penalty, has been paid up in full in Jesus Christ. And God cannot allow an unjust sentence to hang over my head. If Jesus paid it all then eternal death is an unjust sentence for my future. And a just God won’t let it stand. This is the power of Christ’s passion.

Celebrate this truth, church! Worship in constant joy, confidence and astonishment. And to you who don’t yet love Christ’s Lordship and rule, come to Jesus today. Don’t settle for any Redeemer who’s not holding on to a set of keys! Only Jesus has them.