

Awake to righteousness! – 1 Corinthians 15:34.

"In confirmation of the resurrection, Christians were baptized standing on the graves of the dead, to indicate that they would rise again," says Dr. Luther. And St. Paul writes: Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they, then, baptized for the dead?" And concerning himself and his companions he writes: "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not? Then one might say as the worldlings do: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." See how firmly the first Christians and the Apostles held to the certain hope of the resurrection of the dead!"

Will you be misled from the positive doctrine of Holy Writ by the mouthings of those preachers and writers who have fallen from the faith, and of their satellites, who say that there is no resurrection of the dead? Be not deceived! Turn your ears from such talk. "Evil communications corrupt good manners," says the proverb. And such communications will destroy your faith and your conversation in the faith. "Awake to righteousness!" so does the Apostle exhort the Christians. He calls them to awaken to the soberness of righteousness, lest they be intoxicated and misled by the arguments of carnal reason, and with singleness of heart to abide with the Word of Scripture, which teaches a resurrection of the dead in Christ, and a Christian life in the hope thereof. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not!" cries the Apostle. And to those Christians who are infatuated with above-mentioned evil communications he says: "Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." Those who deny the resurrection of the dead know neither the Scriptures nor the power of the omnipotent God.

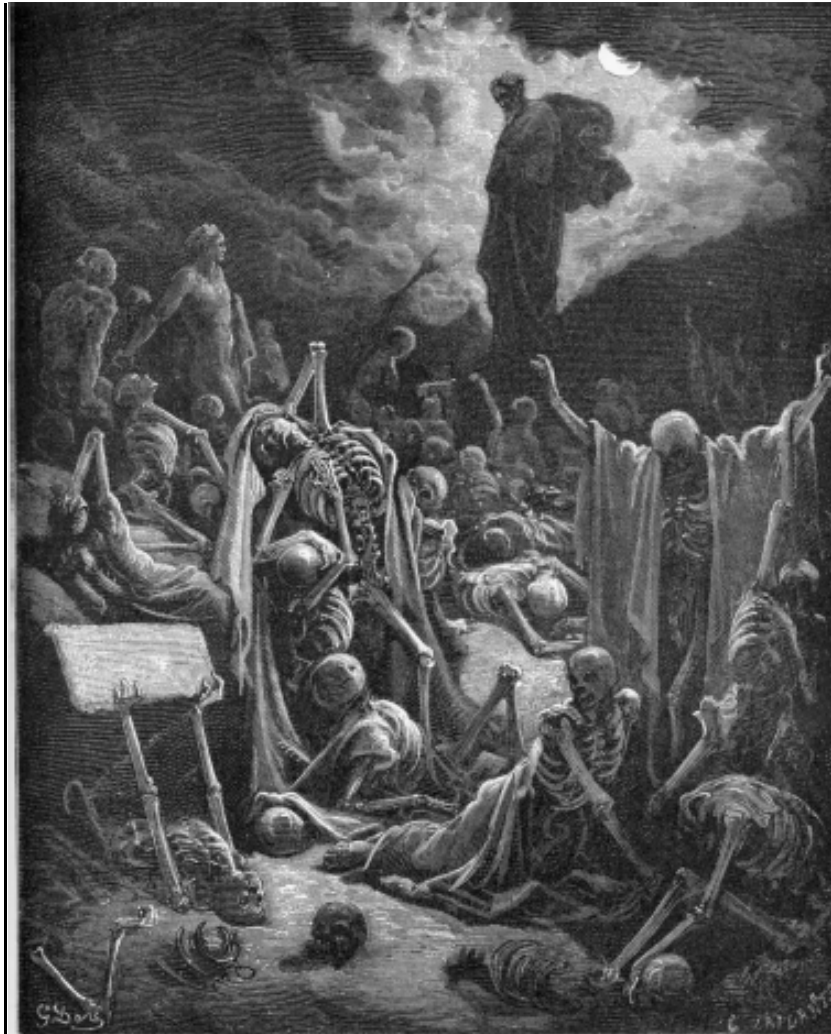


Illustration: The Vision of Ezekiel

A Devotional for the
Week of the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

PRAYER. – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, bestow upon me, Your child, I beg You, through Jesus Christ, my Savior, the power of Your Holy Spirit, that in all things I may believe Your Word with

singleness of heart, not being misled by evil communications, but firmly and gladly hoping for the resurrection of the dead in this uncertain life, and in such hope having my conversation here with a view to gain heaven, and lastly, when my end will be at hand, sinking into Your fatherly hands, which shall keep my soul and body securely unto that great Easterday. Amen.

Hymn 230, 1. 4.

LORD Jesus Christ, strong Hero Thou,
Grim death Thou hast o'erpowered now,
Thou dost destroy hell's gate and chain,
Dost on the third day rise again.

Grant us that we may rise from sin,
A holy life to lead begin,
Till we, from sin and pain set free,
In endless Easter live with Thee.

MONDAY.

How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? – 1 Corinthians 15:35.

But some doubting man will say: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Are they not dust and ashes? –Fool, if God in His Word promises anything, would you then doubt His ability to perform it? And that which you sow into your field, must it not first die and decompose before it germinates and is quickened and sprouts? You say: Yes, but this germinates in the midst of decomposition, and I see no germination in corpses. No, you see nothing of that in corpses; but notwithstanding God will bring about life and resurrection. What is the limit to God's omnipotence?

And as to your question, with what manner of body the dead shall come forth from the grave, let me refer you again to the seed

which you sow into your field. Is the seed which you sow the body which shall be and rise from that seed? Will the seed come forth just as you cast it into the ground? Certainly not! This is but a bare grain, say, of wheat or some other grain. But God gives unto the seed, when it sprouts, a body as it has pleased Him, as He has determined; to every seed He gives his own body. Do but look at the seed you sow. You drop it into the ground. Now it sprouts. How? First there is the young green blade. Then it grows into an ear. After that there is the full grain in the ear. How different is the grain when it shoots up from the grain that is laid into the ground! How much more glorious is the body it receives when it comes forth! And yet that quickened body is the very body of the grain that has been laid into the ground. Is it not?

Likewise our body will not rise just as it has been laid into the ground. Far from it! It will rise infinitely more glorious. And yet it will be the same body that was laid into the ground. And hark! In the resurrection we shall know full well that we are ourselves again. For we are human beings, not the fruit of the field. And our dear ones will know us, and we shall know them. Did not Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration know Moses and Elias who appeared to Jesus with glorified bodies?

PRAYER. – Lord God Almighty, I am waiting for the great miraculous salvation which You will manifest in me. Most mightily and miraculously and gloriously will You raise me up from the earth and lead me into life everlasting. So I will gladly and rejoicingly be laid into the ground as Your seed-corn, O heavenly and omnipotent Savior. Grant that through Your Holy Spirit I may belong to Jesus, the first-fruits of resurrection, that I may follow Him, and likewise rise when the great springtime comes. Amen.

Hymn 220, 1. 4.

JESUS Christ, my sure Defence
And my Savior, ever liveth;
Knowing this, my confidence

Rests upon the hope it giveth,
Though the night of death be fraught
Still with many an anxious thought.

I am only flesh and blood,
And on this corruption seizeth;
But I know my Lord and God
From the grave my body raiseth,
That with Him eternally
In His glory I may be.

TUESDAY.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. – 1 Corinthians 15:42.

God giveth to every grain its own body when it comes forth, and not another. A blade of barley never grows from a grain of wheat. And more than this: from each and every seed-corn the body of just this one seed-corn grows, and not that of another. And yet the glory of the growing seed-corn is far and immeasurably greater than that of the seed which was laid into the ground. So also is the resurrection of the dead. Every man will rise with a human body, not with a body of an altogether different nature. Moreover, every man will rise with his own body, not with a wholly new and strange one. You will be yourself again, and not another. But the glory of our resurrection body will be so immeasurably great that the difference between it and our present body will be as great as between heaven and earth.

– Let me illustrate this, citing words of Scripture. All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial. In the resurrection you will not receive a different flesh, a different body, but your human flesh, thy own human body. And now as regards the glory. The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There

is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also, as respects the glory, will be the resurrection of the dead. There your body will far, far excel your present body in glory and splendor and celestial properties, though it will still be the same body.

Today you have heard nothing essentially different from yesterday's devotion. But this matter is worth being understood fully. Tomorrow you shall hear in what manner your resurrection body will excel your present body in glory, though it will still be the same body.

PRAYER. – Lord, my God, I am but dust and ashes, and do not know how long I shall remain here below. Soon – even today – death may overtake me. And yet I shall live forever. Lord, through Your Word, You give me a glimpse of eternity and You permit me to see a great and everlasting glory, to which I shall awake and arise. Lord, I am Your own through Jesus Christ, my Savior, the Conqueror of death. Do to me according to Your Word. Amen.

Hymn 220, 6.

Then these eyes my Lord shall know,
My Redeemer and my Brother;
In His love my soul shall glow, –
I myself, and not another!
Only there shall disappear
Weakness in and round me here.

WEDNESDAY.

It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.

– 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

This is what the Holy Ghost says concerning the glory which your body will have when it rises from the grave. Now your body is corruptible – of a corruptible nature; the fire of corruption glows within it and comes to the surface now and then, and it will decay altogether in the bowels of the earth; but on the day of resurrection it will come forth with life incorruptible. Now your body, God's own creation, is dishonored, and it will lie in the earth in a most horrible and despicable state; but on the day of resurrection it will be all glory and splendor. Now your body is in weakness; any accident may destroy it, a little disease germ may kill it. But on the day of resurrection it will be endued with eternal power.

And still more. Now your body is a natural body, "eating, drinking, sleeping, digesting, begetting children, etc.," as Dr. Luther puts it, but on the day of resurrection it will be a spiritual body, "requiring," to quote Luther again, "none of these things, and yet being a true body, alive with the spirit." As surely as you now have a natural body, so surely shall you then have a spiritual body. For consider, the first man, Adam – from whom you are descended – was made a living soul, as you may read in the Scripture, made for natural life; but the last Adam, Christ, with whom you are united through faith, through His resurrection entered upon a spiritual life: His human body is pervaded and made spiritual by His divine nature and Spirit.

Here you behold a twofold condition of the human body: the natural and the spiritual. Nevertheless, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual. The first man, Adam, as St. Paul teaches, is of the earth, earthy, for this terrestrial life; the second man, Christ, is the Lord from heaven, and hence, indeed, for the heavenly life. As is the earthy, Adam, such are also we that are earthy: while we live on this earth we have a natural body like Adam. And as is the heavenly, Christ, such also shall we, the heavenly, be: when we rise and enter heaven, we shall have a spiritual body like Christ. As we have borne the image of the earthy, Adam, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, Christ. – So, then, on the day of resurrection our body will be incorruptible, all glory, all strength, entirely spiritual, yes, spiritual:

no longer subject to the laws of this natural life, but qualified for the heavenly life, glorified, pervaded by our spirit which has been made heavenly, like unto Christ's glorious body. O wonderful hope!

PRAYER. – O my Lord and God, I cannot comprehend it now, but I shall most certainly live to see and experience and enjoy it. Your Word, which does not fail, nor pass away, assures me of it. O what glory! O my Lord and Savior, let me be and remain Your own unto my end, that I may obtain and behold what now I long for in faith, until I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness. Amen.

Hymn 220, 7.

What now sickens, mourns, and sighs,
Christ with Him in glory bringeth;
Earthly is the seed and dies,
Heavenly from the grave it springeth;
Natural is the death we die,
Spiritual our life on high.

THURSDAY.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

– 1 Corinthians 15:50.

Surely, this now is plain to you, O Christian, that our present flesh and blood, our body, which has become so miserable through sin, and which from the beginning was made and fashioned for this natural and earthly life, cannot in this condition and disposition inherit and enjoy the heavenly, eternal kingdom of God; our body, which now is subject to corruption, cannot dwell where incorruption dwelleth. Hence on the day of resurrection it will be changed, altered, made new and glorious, spiritual and incorruptible.

But let us show you a divine mystery. We Christians will not all be sleeping in death, but a number of us will be living on earth when Christ comes to establish the heavenly and eternal kingdom of God. But we shall all be changed, all without exception. The bodies of the Christians living on the last day will be changed to be like the bodies of those who are sleeping in their graves and will then be wakened. And all this change and alteration shall take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet of God will sound, and the dead will rise incorruptible, and those of us who are then yet alive will be changed unto the same likeness. Indeed, this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality to be fit for eternal life and the Kingdom of Glory.

PRAYER. – O Almighty Creator, You will make all things new! O Lord and Savior – plenteous in mercy – You will glorify us! O Spirit of the Father and of the Son – who does offer me such hope in Your Word, and who cause a great and mighty yearning in me – steadfastly grant me grace to cling to my Savior in true faith, that through Your sanctification I may be worthy to partake of such glory. Amen.

Hymn 220, 10.

Only draw away your heart
Now from pleasures base and hollow;
Would ye there with Christ have part,
Here His footsteps ye must follow;
Fix your hearts beyond the skies,
Whither ye yourselves would rise!

FRIDAY.

Death is swallowed up in victory. – 1 Corinthians 15:54.

When the dead will rise, and those will have been changed who will be living when Christ will appear unto Judgment, when this

corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, then will be brought to pass that saying which is written: *Death is swallowed up in victory.* "That is to say," writes Dr. Luther, "death will lie prostrate and have no more power; and life will be on top, as it were, and say: The combat has been won! Where art thou, death?" Then shall we shout in glee and sing: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The sting of death, that which brought death into the world and gave it the power it has over us to destroy and devour us and to drag us down to hell, is sin; and the strength of sin, that which makes sin so deserving of death, is the Law, the divine Law, which we have transgressed. "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our Lord Jesus Christ bore our sins for us, in our stead, as our Substitute, and rendered full satisfaction to the Law of God; He entered into combat with death, our death, conquered it, arose triumphantly, brought eternal life to light for us, calls us to Himself, gives us His victory, His righteousness, His life, His blessedness, and glory. Indeed, death is swallowed up in victory! "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting? But thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Through faith in Christ Jesus, our Savior, we are God's dear children. Sin is forgiven. Eternal life is our inheritance. We shall take possession of that when we awaken with the body glorified. Hallelujah!

PRAYER. – Yes, Amen, Hallelujah, Lord Jesus Christ! I see You and have You, my Savior. And so I see and have light in the darkness of sin and death. Sin is forgiven, death has lost all its terrors. In my last hour I shall say to You: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And You shall also enliven my body and make it all heavenly and glorious. Yes, Amen, Lord Jesus, You will surely do this, and give me eternal glory. Keep me in true faith in You, Lord Jesus! This also You will do. Hallelujah, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Hymn 221, 5.

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!

SATURDAY.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 15:58.

What a hope have we! What a blessedness is ours! Death may come at any moment. We laugh at it. We commend our spirit into Jesus' hands, and He receives it. We commend our body into Jesus' hands, and He keeps it; He will wake it on that great day of His, and clothe it with heavenly glory. Then we shall be in eternal glory, within and without. What a hope we have! What a blessedness is ours!

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us be steadfast in the faith in our Savior who is so rich in mercy; let us not be moved from the hope of eternal life; let us always abound in the work of the Lord; let us fight valiantly against sin with the mighty weapons of the Spirit, which our great Lord and Hero furnishes us; let us strive after everything that is good, which our Lord desires; let us hold fast to His Word and to prayer; let us be patient in cross and tribulation; let us be charitable toward our neighbor; let us confess and spread the name of Jesus; let us do good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith, and not grow weary. To be sure, our labor will not be in vain in the Lord. What, then, will the end be, the goal? You know it. Our Lord has given us everything, yes, everything; and brightly, invitingly, sweetly, even ravishingly does the light of eternal life shine upon us through His promises. O Christian, let us belong to Jesus; let us live to Him, serve Him, love Him, honor and praise Him. He gives us eternal and inestimable blessedness.

PRAYER. – O Lord Jesus, who has given me all things necessary unto my salvation, and who will most assuredly give to me an eternal and exceeding weight of glory, grant to me, I implore You, a firm faith, make me immovable with respect to the hope of eternal life, and grant that I may do the work You desire me to do, and always abound in it. O Lord, do perform all these things in me. What am I? I am weak and miserable. But in You do I hope; work effectually in me, O Lord, even as You have been and are still and always will be effectual for me. Amen.

Hymn 230, 4.

Grant us that we may rise from sin,
A holy life to lead begin,
Till we, from sin and pain set free,
In endless Easter live with Thee.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
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