

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 9: THE RETURN AND THE RESURRECTION

The Doctrine of the Return and Resurrection can be stated this way:

Jesus will return to the earth – visibly, bodily, and personally – to complete his plan of salvation. Every soul of a Christian who has died will be reunited with their glorified physical body at the resurrection, and those still alive will be changed to have glorified bodies.

Knowing your destination changes how you take the journey. The Doctrine of the Return and Resurrection must change how we live through this life.

In the Doctrine of the Return and Resurrection, we find another great comfort in trials. This doctrine reminds us that this life is not all there is: when we die, or when Christ returns, we will go on to glory with Jesus, living in paradise with Him.

Jesus Himself used this doctrine as a comfort in His suffering. The Word tells us that it was the knowledge of what was to come – the joy set before Him – that enabled Him to endure the cross.

What is the hardest trial in your life right now? Think about it. Hold it in your mind and consider what it is about it that makes it so hard.

Now think about how you are going to get through it. If you are a believer in Jesus, you have so many resources at your fingertips to help you endure through this trial – not only surviving it, but excelling through it.

Obviously the believer's first resource is the Word of God. In those pages are words of life and encouragement. Words that give practical advice and words that point to Jesus. So clearly going to Jesus in prayer and meditation are critical factors in getting through hard times. But what is it about Jesus' life that is a help to us?

Surely it is a comfort to know that He came to this earth as a man and that He endured everything that we ever will so that He can empathize with us. It is a comfort that He came as a 'man of sorrows' and that He is acquainted with our weakness. It is a comfort to know that He is fully God and therefore powerful to save and to work in our circumstances for our good and for His glory. It is a comfort to know that He is omnipresent, and so He never leaves us alone in our trials, but rather stands by us as our ever-present help.

However, in the Doctrine of the Return and Resurrection, we find another great comfort in trials. This doctrine reminds us that this life is not all there is: when we die, or when Christ returns, we will go on to glory with Jesus, living in paradise with Him. The fact that Christ will return to this earth and will take us home with Him is an outstanding comfort. Our Saviour not only sustains us through our trials; he will one day come and rescue us out of them entirely.

Jesus Himself used this doctrine as a comfort in His suffering. The Word tells us that it was the knowledge of what was to come – the joy set before Him – that enabled Him to endure the cross. He had His eyes fixed on the destination. This world was not His permanent home. The details of this life were not telling the whole story. Jesus kept His eyes and His mind fixed on the greater prize of His eternal home at His Father's side.

This is our very real help, too. This world is not our home. These circumstances do not tell our whole story. Christ's death and resurrection on your behalf purchased your salvation and established your place in God eternal Kingdom. When we try to compare the sin and pain and hardship of this world, with the unspeakable joy and blessing of eternity in the presence of the Lord, this life pales to nothing. The Word of God confirms this. Romans 8:18 says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

These present sufferings, no matter how great, really are nothing in compared to the glory of God that awaits us. They cannot compare in any measure: not length of time, not weight of importance, not strength of

human emotion and response. Our joy on that day will so exceedingly surpass our sorrow now. The comfort then will wipe away even the memory of our discomfort now. The eternal reality of paradise will make even a life of suffering seem like only a moment in time.

When we can keep our eyes on the truth that this life is not all there is for us, when we can keep our focus on our eternal destination, then we have the strength to endure this part of the journey.

And not only endure as if hanging on by a thread, but really living a life that reflects the glory of God that we can only now see in part. Holding fast to the truth of the resurrection gives us the faith to live with joy now in such a way that others will take notice, in spite of the pain we may be experiencing. We can endure this life with joy because of the imminent return of Christ and because of the hope of the resurrection!

When we can keep our eyes on the truth that this life is not all there is for us, when we can keep our focus on our eternal destination, then we have the strength to endure this part of the journey.

IN REVIEW

- Knowing your destination impacts how you plan for, and how you take, the journey. This is true spiritually as well, and so in order to live well, we must know our eternal destination.
- The doctrine of the return and resurrection gives us hope through our trials, and Christ's example of enduring suffering is our guide to know how to apply this doctrine to our lives.
- We can endure this life and any trial that may come our way with joy because of the truth of the unmatched glory that is to come in the resurrection!

HAVE YOUR SAY

- This doctrine does not only affect how you live through trials. It also should impact how we live in times of happiness and prosperity. If Jesus returned for you today, would you be ready? Are you making decisions or living in such a way that you are ready for His return? Seek the Lord humbly and honestly, asking Him to show you areas where your priorities might be misplaced considering your eternal destination.

- If you are experiencing great hardship now, pray and ask the Lord to help you apply this doctrine to your circumstances. Praise Him for His empathy and for His example. Pray that you would be able to keep your eyes on the end of the story, waiting with anticipation for that day when Jesus returns to take you home and to free you from the burdens of this life.

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