

For this life only?

Notes on the Bible readings

- Paul's message to the Corinthians is the importance of belief in the resurrection. He points out that if there is no resurrection, then Jesus was not raised from the dead and their faith has been built upon a lie. This would mean that 'death' is eternal. If that is so, then he has been misrepresenting God, no one is liberated from sin, and Christians are to be pitied.

- Sleep is used as a metaphor for death, and resurrection is the word used to describe what happened to Jesus in the tomb. The Greek words for resurrection in the text translates as 'rise up', or 'get up'. No one knows what it is like, but the appearances of Jesus give us some clues.

- Paul does not think that resurrection has happened to us yet – he talks about it as a future event, but boldly says that Jesus' resurrection is the 'first fruits' of this (v.20). He is urging us to live not for this life only, but for the life beyond too.

- The reading from Luke is the equivalent of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes. Unlike Matthew's Beatitudes, Luke matches three blessings with three woes. By giving blessings to the marginalised and woes to the privileged, Jesus is warning that God turns the natural order of things upside down. Jeremiah gives a precursor to the Beatitudes, with curses for those who trust in 'mere mortals' and blessings for those who trust in the Lord.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ How does this image speak to you?
- ▶ What difference does Jesus' resurrection make to your life?
- ▶ What do you want to say to those who say there is no resurrection?



A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Father, we praise and thank you for the lives you have given us to lead here in your wonderful world.

We are grateful for home and family, work, school and play. We are glad to be able to witness to you in word and in deed here and now.

Yet our hope isn't for this life only, for you resurrected your Son as the first fruits of all who die.

Therefore, we thank you for the hope we have in the hereafter, that we shall be raised to be with you and with one another evermore. Amen.

A prayer for others

Lord, we pray for those whose hope is for this life only, especially those who are facing their own death, or that of a loved one. Enlighten them, we pray; pierce their darkness with rays from heaven that they might find faith and see beyond.

We bring before you a world of people with past regrets, bowed down by concerns in the present, and fears for the future. Help us all, we pray, to be uplifted by the reality of Christ's resurrection, which leads to a bright tomorrow beyond all our tomorrows. Amen.

A personal prayer

Each day, Lord, help me to wake from sleep as I shall one day wake from death – in the knowledge of your presence and the hope of resurrection. So, may my faith shed light from another world, to lighten the cares of this one. Amen.

Live your faith

Eat a piece of seasonal fruit each day this week and, as you eat, thank God for sending Jesus to be the first fruits of the resurrection. Offer a piece of fruit to someone else too!