

Essay #2:  
**Eagerly Await the Savior  
as You Anticipate Resurrection and Glorification**

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In the book of 1 Thessalonians 1:10 God says “AND TO AWAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN, WHOM HE RAISED FROM THE DEAD—JESUS CHRIST WHO RESCUES US FROM THE COMING WRATH.” The people of the city of Thessalonica, especially those who heard and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Paul preached, were living as different people. The gospel had changed their way of living. The gospel motivated them to forsake the unchristian way of life. They were living as people who were waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same gospel that Paul proclaimed is now proclaimed to many countries in the world. The same power that changed the Thessalonians is also working through the word and sacraments that we proclaim. The believers of Thessalonica had one hope in their life. They were waiting for the coming of their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. They were waiting for the resurrection that Jesus Christ will bring to all the dead on the last day. They were waiting for the glorification that Jesus brings on the last day.

The people of Thessalonica give a good example for all believers to follow. The theme of our Convention this year encourages each and every believer to have the same kind of hope. Maybe one of the questions we can receive from both unbelievers and those who believe differently is:

**1. Will There Be a Resurrection of the Dead?**

I think you have met people with the question “Will the body that has been turned to dust, or that has been eaten by a wild animal, turn to life again?”

The same doubts we hear from many and the same ridicule we face nowadays when we speak about resurrection was there at the time of Paul. “BUT IF IT IS PREACHED THAT CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, HOW CAN SOME OF YOU

ESSAY

SAY THAT THERE IS NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD? BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK, 'HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED? WITH WHAT KIND OF BODY WILL THEY COME?'" (1 COR 15:12,35) "WHEN THEY HEARD ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, SOME OF THEM SNEERED" (Acts 17:32).

All these doubts and objections as to the possibilities of the resurrection must be forwarded and answered by our mighty God. Let us hear what He says: "Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God (Mt 22:29).'"

Everyone who believes that there is an omnipotent God will also believe that He is able to do this. He created us through His power and wisdom. He will also raise us through his power and wisdom.

"For if the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised either" (1 Cor. 15:16). Christ's resurrection was not hidden. He appeared to many. It is a fact. He will also raise people. Hear what God says in the same chapter but verse 20. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." There is no room for any doubt concerning resurrection. His resurrection is a sure evidence that we will rise after death.

"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead how can some of you say that there is no resurrection?" (1 Cor. 15:12). All who preach/say that there is no resurrection show that they are not following the true message that is preached by believers.

Christ himself proved from the Old Testament that there is resurrection. He did so in Matthew 22:31-32 when He says, "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'" He is not the God of the dead but of the living. We do have also a person in the Old Testament who confessed his faith in the resurrection of the dead. His name is Job. "I know that my redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I and not another. How my heart yearns within me." (Job 19:25)

#### EAGERLY AWAIT THE SAVIOR AS YOU ANTICIPATE RESURRECTION AND GLORIFICATION

The Book of Daniel also speaks of resurrection. “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan.12:2)

John says in his Book, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:28-29)

Therefore on the basis of Scripture every believer confesses, “I believe in the resurrection of the dead.”

The next question we may ask ourselves is:

### **2. Who Will Be Raised Bodily from the Dead?**

First of all I would like to share with you about false ideas about death in my country. These are beliefs that were established before Christianity and are one of the barriers that Christianity faces. There is a belief that the spirits/souls of those who have died go out of their bodies the moment a person dies. These spirits continue to roam around within the boundaries of the relatives (boundaries mean any place where a relative lives). These spirits become mediators between the living and the god of ancestors. They communicate through night dreams. The spirits see to it that the living are showing love to them (spirits) by giving them food at special times and also by living a good life. Whenever people break these laws, they are given special punishment like leprosy, shortage of rain, and others.

Those who follow the laws are blessed in different ways like becoming rich, having a good job. There are special places where people believe that these spirits stay. They stay in places like big trees, rivers, and mountains. The spirits also communicate through causing one of the relatives to collapse from time to time and speaking the message to people. When this happens, people must respond as quickly as possible. This is what they believe is life after death.

It is true that the soul goes out of the body at the time of death. But it goes either to hell or to paradise/heaven. The resurrection is the rejoining of that soul with its body on the last day when

## ESSAY

the Lord comes again. Not only those who believed in Christ and looked forward to their resurrection will rise but also those who did not believe and were not looking forward to it. It will be Christ's call to rise. Unlike the call to repent and believe that can be rejected, this call will be for all that died and no one will reject. Luke says in his book: ". . . that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15).

Surely it will be a wonderful day. Every soul will go to its original body. Even the soul of those bodies that were burned to ashes or those whose bodies are missing in the Asian tsunami will find them and rejoin them. The Lord Almighty will do it.

I had a relative who died while as a member of a church we call Ethiopian church. A bishop of that church preached at the funeral. From the beginning to the end of his sermon, his message was about the difficulties that our remaining family will face because of the death of that person. He said "kwatha." He is finished. He is no more. He will not come back. He will not show all the good things he was doing to you. We will never meet anymore. The good man is gone. Amen!

When the burial was done, one of the relatives spoke to me and said, "It would be good if we had no service at all. The man did not bring to us any hope of resurrection. The more he preached louder, the more tears came from our eyes."

This relative reminded me about what one of the pastors told me when we were together at a funeral at my congregation. It was when I was an evangelist. He told me: "The heart of a funeral sermon is the message of resurrection". Therefore, we conclude that all people who will be dead by the time Jesus comes again will rise. This brings us to another question:

### **3. Who Will Be Bodily Glorified?**

We answer: Only those who at their time of death had died in faith in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and those who at the time of Christ's coming would be found believing in their Savior Jesus. Or we can just say "all who will be found in God's kingdom". Who are these? They are those bodies who have rejoined their souls that were with the Lord in heaven since the time they died. They are the people who had Christ's rule in their

hearts until their time of death. The other group that will be glorified is the one that will be living but has Christ's rule in their hearts until the moment Christ comes. The two groups above will be in one group. They are the ones that Jesus calls "sheep". They will be separated from unbelievers. Apostle Paul speaks about this when he says, "Listen I tell you a mystery, we will all be changed—in a flash, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and (we) will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'". (1 Cor 15:51-54)

The verse I have just quoted above has reminded me about the message that one of the evangelists in my home village always preaches. In every sermon he begins like this: "The perishable will be clothed with the imperishable". The evangelist is looking forward to the day when all the believers will be glorified. Therefore only believers will be glorified.

That brings us another question:

#### **4. What Will Be Involved in the Glorification of Our Bodies?**

We shall be the same people as we are now. You remember how the poor Lazarus recognized Abraham in God's bosom. You may also remember how Peter on the day of transfiguration of our Lord recognized Elijah and Moses speaking with the Lord. We will be the same people but we will be changed. (1 Cor.15:52)

Our bodies will be spiritual. They will be changed bodies that will not be subject to the needs of this life nor to the laws which now govern us. We shall have incorruptible bodies that will be free from traces and consequences of sin.

Each one of us here knows how sometimes we struggle with certain sins in our life. With our glorified bodies that will not happen. We shall have strong bodies that will be free from all frailties, weakness, defects and deformities. Our bodies will never die. We shall have glorious bodies clothed with beauty, perfection, honor, and glory. "Who by the power that enables

## ESSAY

him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” (Phil. 3:21)

“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 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 Cor. 15:42-44)

With our glorified bodies we shall fully know God. We shall know his will and his ways. We shall understand those things that are now still dark to us. All our questions both with respect to certain mysteries of doctrine and to happenings in our personal lives will be fully answered.

“For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (1 Cor 13:9-13)

There will no old Adam, no temptation to contend with, no sorrow, no grief, but always in peace. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.” (Rev 21:4)

There will be a wonderful life in heaven. There will be perfect righteousness and holiness. There will be no differences among the saints but the thoughts, desires, and actions of all of them will be in complete harmony with the will of God. There will be full satisfaction, perfect contentment. “And I in righteousness I will see your face. When I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.” (Psalms 17:15)

Here in this life each and every country cries for security. The more money they spend to secure their lives, the more we hear of destructions involving the same areas. Our glorious bodies will not meet such things at all. “My father who has given them to me is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my father’s hand.” (John 10:29)

#### EAGERLY AWAIT THE SAVIOR AS YOU ANTICIPATE RESURRECTION AND GLORIFICATION

Here in this life we may have joy and pleasure but some conditions may come suddenly and take them away from us. Our glorified bodies will have unspeakable joy and God pleasing pleasure that no one, no condition or circumstance will end it. "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy" (John 16:22).

Our joy will reach its climax when we shall see God as He is. "Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Already I can guess what your next question is.

#### **5. How Much Glory Will This Be?**

Paul in his second letter to Corinth admits that the joys and pleasure of heaven are so great that it is not possible to adequately describe them in human tongue ( 2 Cor 12:2-14). We will know about it completely when we are up there. However, there will be degrees of glory. As there are degrees of punishment for the lost in hell, and as there are degrees and ranks among the good angels in heaven, so there will be degrees of glory for the saints in heaven. Greater glory is given as reward and not of merits. I think you know the parable of the ten minas. "The first one came and said, 'Sir your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities'" (Luke 19:16-17). Here the master clearly told the man that what he has done is a small thing and yet we see the master putting him in charge of big things. It is because of the love the master had.

When I started writing this paper, I could see as if something like a video moving in my mind. I believe the same thing happened to us all when I started reading this paper. It tells us about people coming to life again. It tells us about people (believers) having everlasting joy.

But some people spend time saying that only a few will enjoy that peace. We believers have God's Word that assures us of the fact all believers will enjoy this glory. "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before

#### ESSAY

the throne and in front of the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in the their hands.” (Rev. 7:9)

As in my country, many people worry about the name of the church. There are several well-known churches that have been there for a long time. It has become like the custom of many people to influence their children and those who want to marry them to force them to join those churches. The bad thing is that they don't care about what that church teaches.

John in his book does not mention the name of the church of the great multitude he saw standing before the throne of God. The people who were glorified were “they who have come out of great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev 7:14)

The Lord will gather his believers from all those places, groups that taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. He will gather all those who have trusted His son Jesus as their only Savior from sin. What an encouragement for all of us! The Lord has continued to bless our church by allowing us having only those pastors who cling to the truth. No doubt the Lord will also gather many from our church. He will do so not because of the name Lutheran, but because the gospel is proclaimed in our church.

At this point let us rebuke those who teach falsely concerning “who will be glorified”. There are those who teach that at the time of His coming, He will give a second chance to those unsaved. They even go further by saying that unlike this time when it is possible to deny the call from the Lord to repent, that second chance will be compulsory. When we say the people will be many, this is in no way supporting the teaching that says “all”. However, when “all” means all believers in Christ then that is the truth. “All” believers will be glorified. All Lutheran believers, all believers from other churches too will be glorified.

There will be a wonderful glory. We will have a new heaven and a new earth. The old earth that was occupied by people who lived in constant struggle against three enemies namely: sin, power of the Devil, and death will be no more. There will be new things. The point of a new heaven and new earth brings longer debate. Our advice is always to remember that we

EAGERLY AWAIT THE SAVIOR AS YOU ANTICIPATE RESURRECTION AND GLORIFICATION

will know fully when we are up there. At this point I would like to ask you to practice Greek with me to try to know what will happen to the earth.

2 Peter 3:10, “The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

παρελεύονται	(fut. ind. παρέρχομαι) pass by, pass away
στοιχεῖα	(στοιχείον) things arranged in a row; alphabet; building blocks; the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe
καυσούμενα	(pres. pass. part. καυσώω) set on fire, burn up
λυθήσεται	(fut. pass. ind. λύω) loose the bonds, untie; dissolve, melt

Literal Translation: “The noisy skies will pass away, and the burning elements will dissolve, and the earth and every work in it will be discovered” (variant: “consumed by fire”).

Some theologians suggest that the Lord will use the melted materials to create the new ones. I don’t know what the Lord will do to make the new heavens and new earth. One thing I know is that He is almighty. He knows what He will do. He can just say the word and what He wants can happen. He can also use the melted materials.

After being encouraged about the life we will enjoy, one cannot stop there. What should be the Christian’s attitude and comfort in anticipating resurrection and glorification? While the message of resurrection pertains to the future, it has an important and practical bearing on our personal life.

- When Christians learn that it is only through faith they may attain to their glorious inheritance, they are moved to repent their sins and believe in their Savior Jesus Christ. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31)

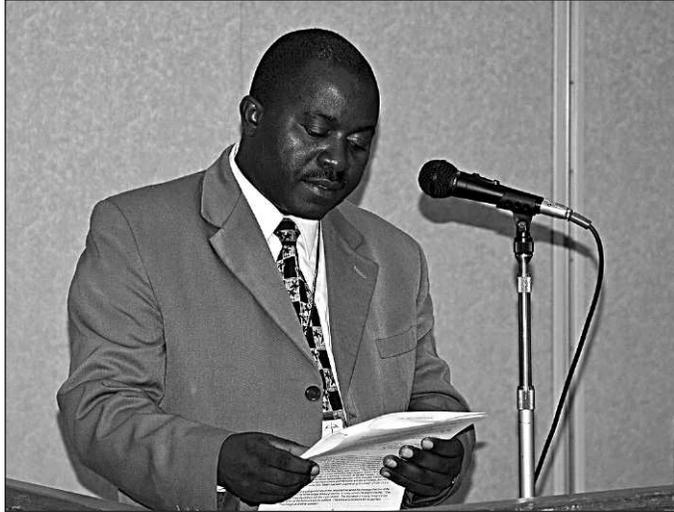
#### ESSAY

- Christians are motivated to examine themselves in order to remain faithful to their Lord until he comes again. “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.” (1 Cor 13:5)

Surely this is the time when each and every Christian should not be just idle. It's our time to read the Bible and continue to go through the lessons we learned when we were baptized, confirmed, or even going through the books and lessons we learned at the seminary. I do remember the three questions that our evangelist was saying to us when he was teaching us how to prepare ourselves when preparing for Holy Communion. I do think that those questions are good not for only Holy Communion but also at all times as we are waiting for the coming of the Lord.

- As Christians we know that we don't have a continuing city/place but are looking forward to that holy city where only saints will enter.
- They live as not of this world “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of it.” (John 17:14-16)
- They avoid worldliness.
- They are to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)
- They do not set their affection on the things of this earth but on the things above. “Set your minds on things above not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3:2)
- As joy fills the heart of every believer, he goes out to share the message with others.
- The message of glorification comforts the believer so much that he is patient in all the temptations, troubles/difficulties that he goes through in this life.
- May the Lord continue to keep us in faith as we await for that great day of our Lord when we will be glorified. May He make us faithful witnesses of this truth to other people.

EAGERLY AWAIT THE SAVIOR AS YOU ANTICIPATE RESURRECTION AND GLORIFICATION



Frackson Chinyama of Malawi

*Questions*

1. Is there any cultural belief in your country concerning life after death?

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2. Write any false teaching about death of any church you know.

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ESSAY

3. What encouragement do the people who live unrepentant life get from the false teaching of a “second chance of repentance” when Christ comes again?

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4. True or false? The teaching that we will be glorified by faith alone is a weak teaching. It encourages sinful living in this life.
5. True or false? Since we can pray for those who do not believe in Christ so that they can accept God’s word, we can also do the same with the souls that are in hell so that they can receive God’s mercy.