I’m Not Sure I Know What We Believe: About Christ’s Return

John 5: 24-29, 14: 1-3

Today’s statement of belief brings a sense of anticipation of something to come.

I hate it when that happens, it’s like a show we are watching builds up to a big ending and then gets canceled before the plot gets resolved. We need resolution.

OR

Think of the story of the Bible like this:

There is a wonderful God who created this beautiful world and beautiful plan, but we, in our sin, messed it all up. This God has gone to extraordinary lengths to repair this broken situation, even sending his own Son, but even now, after all that Jesus has done, we only catch little glimpses of the resolution that God desires and that we long for.

It’s like everyone once in a while we can see and hear the intended beauty God designed again.

We sense that there is something more to resolve this…we are anticipating a resolution to this salvation song…there must be one more episode left…where God finally sets everything right, once and for all.

Statement of Belief #8 gives us this anticipated resolution.

“We believe our Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgment will take place.”

Scripture (on screen) John 5: 24-29, 14: 1-3

Let’s use this scripture and this statement and see what we can learn.

We’ll break the statement into its three obvious parts.

1. Our Lord will return…(John 14: 1-3)
   1. John 14 is Jesus’ own promise of his return
   2. The other NT writers pick up this theme as well
   3. As Jesus came the first time [Bethlehem], so he will come again
      1. Incarnationally (in the flesh) born, crucified, resurrected, and return…all embodied
   4. The story that begins in Genesis will ultimately reach its conclusion
   5. This is a bit hard to grasp but consider it in light of some things we know well
      1. Lord’s Prayer — “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth…” This kingdom that Jesus began, he will one day return to claim and rule.
      2. Great Commission — “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me…” He is the true King. King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
   6. All of this adds up to the scriptural reality that Jesus is King of Kings and one day he will return to reign in the place he created.
   7. So why does this matter to us?
      1. Sense of accountability — As one who has been redeemed by Jesus’ death and resurrection, I have something to do. I am expected to carry out Jesus’ work until he comes again. [Jesus’ stories about a king going away on a journey…]
      2. Sense of anticipation — What Jesus began, he is going to complete. What started in Eden, got re-formatted in Bethlehem, is about to come to fruition in Christ’s return.
2. The dead will be raised…(John 5: 28-29a)
   1. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead (bodily), so we too will be raised from the dead (bodily)
   2. This is the resurrection of the body that Paul is so excited about.
   3. Resurrection isn’t just a soul proposition, it means that we will be raised as Jesus was—bodily. [first fruits language]
      1. Paul, as a good Jew, would have anticipated resurrection at the end of all things, but when Jesus rose from the dead, it signaled that God was beginning this new creation with Jesus! God had broken right into time and space and begun his Kingdom. Because he did, Paul realized that the kingdom was indeed at hand as Jesus had preached. Paul began to boldly proclaim that since Jesus was raised, we too would be raised with Christ.
   4. Article 16 of our articles of faith, “…that the bodies both of the just and the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits…” John clarifies.
   5. These bodies, like Jesus’ body, along with all of creation, will be redeemed and we will enter into our eternal vocation serving King Jesus as he makes all things new.
   6. It’s a sequel to Ezekiel 37 — the dry bones live again to serve God
   7. It’s a sequel to John 11 — Why is Lazarus raised? To continue serving with Jesus and to point toward our resurrection.
3. Final judgment will take place… (John 5:29-30)
   1. We don’t like to think or talk about judgment
   2. but the Bible does
   3. Judgment is not our job (Sermon on the Mount)
   4. But it is God’s job (5:29-30)
   5. We think of judgment as precise, dealing with every thought and action of our lives, and it is, but don’t miss the bigger question.
   6. God is asking, “What have you done with the beauty I have given you?”
      1. [Keith Davis’ convertible]
         1. pull up, slam my door into yours as I get out of my car
         2. talk about all the ways some other car is way nicer than yours
         3. light up the tires as I back out, run it up over the curb and into a mailbox, fishtail it sideways as I leave your neighborhood
         4. call you 3 hours later and tell you you’ll have to tow it home because it “broke down”
         5. never say “Thank you”
      2. The world and all of creation, the story of God’s love, the sacrifice of Jesus, the call to love one another…what have you done with this beauty?
         1. Have we ignored its value?
         2. Have mistreated all that God has given us?
         3. Have we destroyed it for our own foolish pleasures?
   7. We will need to give an account to the Giver for what we have done with the Gift.

Close: All of this talk is kind of “one day, some day…” but it has a really practical component.

Jesus always makes it clear that the eternal has direct ties to the temporal. What we do with the stuff of our lives impacts the future and eternity.

[David Goodwin’s Story: When a student makes fun of another student, it is the work of the kingdom of this world, not the Kingdom Jesus began and will complete.]

So what about you. What kingdom are you contributing to with your thoughts and actions?