

FRIDAY 21 October 2022 "Glorious Transformation" (1 John 3:1, 2)

Good Friday to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

No matter where you live in the world the young people and children there have heroes, don't they? Often, they are mythical figures from books or movies or folklore, but these days very popular heroes are also athletes or movie stars or royalty or successful people. Statues from ancient times tell us this has been part of almost every society for millennia.

These days we are spending time with the apostle John as he is writing his first letter to Christians in the first century. So come, let's gather around and watch John continue his writing. He's going to write about one of the most famous heroes of all time... **the resurrected Jesus Christ!**

As John spreads out the parchments, he's beginning his third chapter: "***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 [Jesus] appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Jesus as He is...***" (1 John 3:2) Oh how these early Christians loved it when John called them his friends and reminded them that they were God's chosen, loved and adopted children!

But John here was stretching their minds and hearts to consider a remarkable concept. What concept? *That when Jesus returns to earth it will be a visible, tangible experience and all will see Him and recognize Him. But even more preposterous is this promise: that authentic Christians will receive heavenly, glorified, immortal bodies, very similar to that of the resurrected body of Jesus!*

John had been a close friend of Jesus and he'd been with the resurrected Jesus several times after that historic weekend of His crucifixion, burial and resurrection. John had spoken with the resurrected Jesus, had meals with Him, and even touched those nails scars in His hands! John was fascinated with the body Jesus had AFTER His resurrection! His hands, and we presume His feet, bore the scars of those horrible nails! Remember, John records for us in John 20:24 that one week after His resurrection, Jesus showed those scars to His disciple Thomas and challenged Thomas to believe it was really Him, the resurrected Jesus!

John here is encouraging his readers by telling us that if we are alive when Jesus returns to earth, we will SEE Him in that very same, resurrected body which He has now in heaven. And more than that, each authentic, 'born again' Christian, from all time, will receive from God a resurrected, immortal body, just as Jesus has!!

It's safe for us to assume some of those who would read John's letter were handicapped, some were crippled, some would listen intently as others would read John's letter because they were blind. The resurrected body of Jesus was amazing. *It was miraculously healed from the terrible beating and crucifixion, but at least some of the healed scars remained and many people saw and touched those scars.* We can only imagine the bruising on the body of Jesus from the beatings, but none of the Gospel writers make any mention of the resurrected body of Jesus showing any signs of the brutality that He suffered. So that tells me the body of Jesus experienced a mighty healing and restoration to perfect wholeness during His resurrection, but His body also retained some scars as proof that it was really Jesus.

I believe John was making it clear we Christians, regardless of our physical limitations or handicaps, will also receive healed, glorified, heavenly, perfect bodies just as Jesus has. But when and how??

When John here writes "**... we know that when He [Jesus] appears, we shall be like Him, for we will see Jesus as He is.**" John is speaking about the next time Jesus returns to earth to gather up all His followers. The angels who were at the ascension of Jesus were very clear that Jesus will return to earth in the same way He left. (Acts 1:9-11) The apostle Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, speaks with clarity about this wonderful and unannounced day of the return of the Lord Jesus: "**...we do not want you to be unformed about those who sleep in death...for we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord's own word we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command and the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**"

Paul is making it clear those Christians who have already died, and their bodies buried, will experience a resurrection very similar to the resurrection of Jesus. *Their dead bodies will come alive and be healed and transformed into the type of body Jesus has and reunited with the soul and spirit which has been in heaven since the moment of their death.* Jesus will bring with Him those souls & spirits and Jesus will Sovereign over this glorious resurrection. Don't worry friends about those who have been dead a long time, or those bodies which were cremated by choice or in disasters, God doesn't need any remains from the body of the deceased to make a brand new, immortal, glorified, heavenly, perfect body for them. Isn't that a glorious thought?

Paul is also very clear that all those authentic Christians who are alive at that glorious moment will experience a physical transformation as their earthly bodies are transformed into heavenly, glorified, immortal bodies. And all of us will rise up into the air, as Jesus did in His ascension, and we will be united with Jesus forever.

Isn't that an amazing promise of God? When Paul wrote his first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he spent his entire 15th chapter on this remarkable reality of the resurrection of all followers of Jesus from all time, in every place. Now friends, I can't tell you with certainty the date of John's authorship of this first little letter, but we believe it may have been after Paul had written both 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, so it's likely some of John's readers may have also heard about this glorious resurrection from Paul's letters.

I'd like us to pause a moment and imagine yourself in one of those cities or towns several hundred miles away from Jerusalem in the later part of the first century. You likely never saw Jesus or heard Him speak. You've never personally met any of the apostles nor anyone who can tell you a firsthand, eyewitness account of what they experienced with Jesus. But you have placed your full faith and trust in the Gospel of Jesus, and you believe strongly that you are genuinely born again. As a result, you frequently are persecuted, publicly harassed by people who think it's all simply a wild story. Now with these words from John, oh how greatly encouraged you are! The thought of you personally seeing the resurrected Jesus and receiving a new glorified, heavenly body like His and being gathered up with all other Christians from all around the world, to ascend up to heaven with Jesus... *oh my can you see how simply overwhelming that would be for these dear first century Christians? But what about you and me? Is it an overwhelming promise for us as well?*

Listen to it again ***"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Jesus! Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Jesus appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is!!"*** (1 John 3:1,2)

Now that, my friends, is some of the best possible news for every Christian in every place in the world, in every generation! Does it awaken great joy in you, my friends? Does it make you want to shout and worship our heavenly Father for it is HIS great plan by which we will gather around His throne, ALL His chosen people, His sons and His daughters from all human history! Oh my, we must worship in song and prayer right now, wherever you are.

Here's a great song, and I urge you to praise Him and thank Jesus for making it all possible for YOU!

Today's Scripture is 1 John 3:1, 2.