

Isaiah 26

*19 Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.*

*20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms,  
And close your doors behind you;  
Hide for a little while,  
Until indignation runs its course.*

*21 For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place  
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;  
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed,  
And will no longer cover her slain.*

What a strange Easter is this 12th of April 2020. Perhaps we could extend it to July 12th like our taxes? No Easter egg hunts. No Easter bunny leaving eggs with candy at the park. No ECO church goes this year. ECO? Easter and Christmas Only.

We will miss the Cantata and miss each other. Those who have authority over us have asked that we stand down. While I'm confident we don't have the whole story, I believe the right thing to do at this point is to obey those who have authority over us.

Romans 13 is non-exclusive. vs.1 *Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.* It doesn't say obey them if they're your chosen political party, it says, if they're there, God has control over the fact that they have authority whether you like them much, or not.

The single exception is when we have a clear mandate to do something and the government is interfering with God's clear charge.

Some of you might say; "Don't we have a clear mandate to not cease assembling in Hebrews 10?"

*24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,  
25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

Good deeds associated and driven by love is what our Governor asked us to do. Cease assembling for a short (we hope) time period for the good of us all. Our little family is so small, we don't want to wake up when this plague passes over us and have anyone missing.

So we approach this strange resurrection morning with none of the world's usual fanfare. The Wall Street profits from holiday spending will be a shadow of previous years. Face masks are in. Chocolate bunnies and jelly beans are out.

But that isn't what's really on the world's mind. The world around us is slightly panicked because of the threat that . . . this is all there is, this is all we get, and now some virus is floating around and wants to invade us and take away what little we got in the first place.

All I get is 60 years. Gotta make the most of it. It's all about me and my needs. Kill anything, including babies, that might take something away from my little short span of self indulgence. That was grim enough. But now some virus is going to cut even the little sunshine I could get for myself short?

In my lifetime, mostly used up, I've seen a massive shift to *that* world view. The physical that the 5 senses can measure and understand scientifically is all there is. That's it. You need to write down your "bucket list" and check off the boxes because time is speeding by and you've got to get what you can get. Now. And any thing that challenges those possibilities is a threat.

The collective world around us has weighed the options and decided it's worth

destroying our economy, our ease and comfort and security, in order to extend total days on earth. It's interesting to watch this unfold.

But what if . . . ? What if this life is 5 minutes long and eternity is waiting beyond what can be seen. A sphere our finite minds can only slightly understand. Things beyond where science can measure.

In my lifetime we have learned that our solar system and galaxy is kind of dinky. The vastness and distances of what our new "eyes" in space have shown us are almost unfathomable.

And yet an ancient book says that He who created everything is going to roll up those universes and galaxy's like an old scroll. So vast we can't measure but so insignificant to the Creator, it's just a barrier that He will remove when the day He has set in place is come.

We'll trade everything to grasp at a few more hours of this life, yet an old book tells us this life is like the morning dew that vanishes. It's like a blade of grass that is green for a few finite hours and then it dies and is blown away in the wind. Gone from it's place, not remembered.

Jesus told His listeners an unalterable truth one beautiful spring morning; It's in Matthew 6:27. The sermon on the mount. He said; "*And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?*"

It's a rhetorical question folks. The answer is already known. The question only makes us reflect on the truth that the question brings into the light. God has numbered our days, hours, minutes, breaths.

Now don't mis-understand. The same person also said we should use our heads a little bit. He said we should be *wise as serpents and innocent as doves*. Mt. 10:16 We are to be prudent. The barriers at the post office and the face masks the ladies at the grocery store who meet person after person all day long wear are prudent. Standing farther away than most people can

expectorate is prudent.

Although in hay fever season when I'm sneezing my head off 6 feet might not be enough. The terms we come up with humor me. *Social distancing*. Clearly it is anti-social distancing.

What if . . . ? What if there's more than the 60 or 80 years we get here? Does that, if it's true, affect the sense of panic our world is experiencing? What about a guy that says; *For me to live . . is Christ . . and to die is gain*.

Ppn. 1:21

A guy that is so sold out to the idea that this life is temporary and limited he says, the only thing of importance now is to get as much of Christ as I can get my hands on. I get up in the morning and every breath is to serve Him and know Him better and to do everything with one motive, glorify my Master. That's the whole point of living, but honestly, what I really want, is to finish this race and gain Him totally.

I chose an obscure passage of scripture this morning to celebrate this unusual Lord's resurrection day. I was reading a book about a pastor in Scotland in the 1840's and it mentioned these words as being inscribed on the wife of a 1700's previous pastors wife's grave. And I thought what perfect words for today.

The pastor's name was Robe and he was instrumental in an awakening in Kilsyth Scotland in 1742-3. When his first wife died he had the words inscribed on her headstone in hebrew;

*Thy dead men shall live,  
together with my dead body shall they arise.  
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:  
for thy dew is as the dew of herbs,  
and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

In all of recorded history, and we believe all of it *is* in fact recorded for us, two groups of people understood and dwelled on earth with the truth that this

life is in fact not all you get. The Jews and the Christians.

Job, at the time of Abraham, just 20 generations removed from Adam, the first man, Job said; *25 But I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last He will stand upon the earth. 26 Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God....* Job 19:25,26

Other peoples had fanciful ideas of afterlife but none of them are intelligible or founded. We share with the Jews, truth's that cannot be found out, that were given to us by God through men that He chose to reveal truth to.

We believe, because of this book, that not only is this life 5 minutes long, comparatively, the next life after we leave this physical sphere will be eternal. We will be self aware beings, someplace, whether in eternal bliss with our Creator, or in eternal torment, alone in thick darkness and indescribable agony forever.

Let's walk through those verses in Isaiah 26 very quickly this morning as we think about resurrection. It is a song of a people in great stress looking forward to the day of their victory when Messiah comes and rescues them.

Vs. 3 is an introduction for us. It's one of those verses that is written in the flyleaf of my Bible so that I would never forget where in the book it dwells.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee!* Isaiah 26:3

What a comfort to a people under duress. A people who are stressed by perils of every kind. Persecution from without and within. Who is the "thee" that their mind is anchored to? Vs. 4 tells us.

*"Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.* Isaiah 26:4

We are anchored to a rock. The hebrew word could be used for boulder or

mountain. Something immovable. Also in this verse is an interesting dualism with the names of God. It is a veiled reference to Christ the Messiah of Israel who is God. He is the rock that we anchor our souls to so that we have peace no matter what this world throws at us.

*19 Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.*

Verse 19 is what drew me to the passage. The answer to our secular world that believes this is it. This is all there is. You've got to grab life and step on others in order to do so if necessary, because this is it! This is all you get.

To the secular world we say; This isn't all there is. In fact the only significant task in this life is to understand your position before the Creator who owns everything and ask for His mercy.

It's like the old joke. "You had one job." There is a sense that in this life, we have one job, and after that, everything else is secondary.

That one job is to understand that we were born in sin. We are born into Adam's family and we all inherit sin. We come into this world as sinners and the entire world is under the judgement of God. We are born into a condemned family. Sin separates us from God.

But God sent His only Son to take our place in the judgement due. He died the death we were owed. He dies for your sins and in place of the sin He removes, He accredits to your account His righteousness.

The Jews were looking forward to the Messiah. We look backwards to the completed work of that same Messiah that they rejected.

Why do we believe? Because He died and death could not hold Him. He

arose from the dead on the third day. This isn't a fairy tale we look back on and honor the memory of this morning.

He rose from the dead and reliable witnesses, folks just as solid as you and me, witnessed the Risen Christ and wrote what they beheld in a book. Several books by several authors all saw the Risen Lord and wrote it down.

The apostles were not flaky people. They would be excellent witnesses in any courtroom. They were solid, honest, hard working, sane people. And besides those witnesses, He appeared later on the road to Damascus to Paul the apostle, and after the resurrection He appeared to over 500 people.

Lots of solid witnesses to establish the fact. A courtroom only requires two good witnesses to establish facts. We have multiples and multiples of witnesses and testimony that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again from death to life.

Jesus is the first fruit of many who will rise from the dead. In this song of Isaiah it wasn't lost on the people that all of the blessings promised were for a future time. They would die without seeing the blessing. The victory.

Vs. 19 is a simple straight forward promise that those who belong to Jesus, Messiah, those who left this world behind in order to belong to Him, they trusted Him for forgiveness, they cried out to God for mercy and forgiveness, they die and turn to dust, but not forever. They will see the Kingdom. Like Job said, with my eyes, I will see Him.

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Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
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We are made from dust. Dirt. God created us from dust and when we die, we return to dust. There's nothing drier than dead things. The water is gone.

Dryness sets in and eventually decomposition returns us to dust. Dry bones.

But on that day your dew is like the freshness of dawn. Life. Wet, fresh, vital life. Jesus rose from the dead, although He did not see corruption, we will also rise from the dead, or be caught up together in the air with those who preceeded us in death.

Now, the next verses are interesting because I think they give us clues to the time frame when these events will occur.

The Bible is the story of paradise lost, and paradise regained. And the prophets give us details. Little pictures that fit together like puzzle pieces.

Paradise regained is cataclysmic. Most of the book of Revelation is about the events immediately prior to the return of the Messiah, Jesus, in great glory where He engages in war with Satan and all of the rebellious of this world, and takes back this planet as His own.

That's messy. When that happens it's messy. Fire and brimstone and vapor of smoke. Mountains melting like candle wax into the sea. Men crying out for the rocks to crush them so they can't see the conflagration. The sky peeled apart, rolled up like a scroll, and Jesus comes in battle array to engage His enemies.

Nothing Hollywood has dreamed up so far comes close. And the Jews, God's chosen people are right in the middle of it. Antichrist is doing his best to annihilate all christians who have believed after the rapture, and all of the jews. Total annihilation. If you believe in Jesus, your head comes off.

And right at the end, God opens the eyes of the Jews and they recognize Jesus the Messiah that they rejected and killed, and they believe. All of them. All who are left anyways.

*20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms,  
And close your doors behind you;*

*Hide for a little while,  
Until indignation runs its course.*

No, that verse isn't about the Coronavirus. It might be good advice for those who are working at avoiding the coronavirus.

People are asking those questions already. Is this it?? Is this the end. Is the apocalypse upon us?

My answer would be, so far, this isn't even a birth pang. It might be later. Too soon to tell. I guess the potential is there if that's God's plan and timing. But, not yet. We don't know the times or seasons, do we. All we can do is watch and pray for those we love right now.

Let me show you another time, in the book of Revelation that sounds like what we have in vs. 20. In Revelation 12 we have a vision of a woman who is about to give birth to a male child.

The woman is Israel, and the Child is the Messiah, the King of kings.

*vs. 4a And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.*

*5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

Antichrist is going to try to annihilate every Jew. And there's a specific time marker when this event is going to occur. The antichrist will enter and desecrate the Jewish temple, and set up an image of himself there as God.

Jesus is specific. He says when you see that event; Run. Physically run for the hills. Get out of there. Get to high ground. This is all very literal. Run to the hills, He says.

*15 “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19 “But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20 “But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; 21 for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. 22 “And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Matt. 24*

The jews who remain will run for their very lives. God has prepared a place of safety for them to wait for the remaining indignation and judgement to happen.

*20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms,  
And close your doors behind you;  
Hide for a little while,  
Until indignation runs its course.*

God has prepared a place for His people to literally hide while the conflagration is carried out. A safe place. Back to our picture in Revelation 12; vss. 10 - 17

*10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,  
“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. 12 “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”*

*13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

That's quite a ride, isn't it. We have no idea what the great eagle is that brings those who belong to God to safety.

Anyways, there is sanctuary for the jews who recognize the Messiah and believe just before the end.

*21 For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place  
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;  
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed,  
And will no longer cover her slain.*

The first anthropomorphic reference to the earth is hauntingly similar to this verse. When Cain slew Abel the blood of Abel cried out from the ground in Genesis 4:10

Man is made in God's image, and murder is forbidden because all murder is a satanic strike against God. And since the fall, in the garden, blood has been spilt continually.

Jesus is coming to take back the authority to reign on this planet. He will lock Satan up for 1000 years waiting his final judgement. And the Lord will rule, on earth, on David's throne, in Jerusalem for a thousand years. A millenium

of peace after 6 milleniums of bloodshed.

Why do we believe. Why would anyone believe such bizarre things? Especially in 2020. We believe because a man who obviously came from heaven, and had miraculous powers over all creation, He healed the sick and raised the dead, He fed 5000 men and their families creating food from a small boys lunch box, He spoke words to the fierce wind and it obeyed His voice. He spoke directly to demonic spirits and they fled from Him in terror.

All of that is written down for us by credible witnesses. 2 gospels would be enough for a law courtroom. God gave us 4. And then that same man was murdered, and put into a tomb, and on the 3rd day after His burial, He rose from the dead.

Covid 19 isn't even a blip on the radar screen so far. It may be. We're watching. But we're watching, informed by an ancient book. God is sovereign over everything that happens. He was in control when His Son was murdered on a cross, and He rose from the dead. And He is in sovereign control of all of the events that are happening 2000 years later.

Satan is running amuck with evil here, and the book tells us it gets worse and worse at the end. We're watching and waiting, but mostly, we are not fearful, because we are owned and belong to the Lord, Jesus. We are His possession if we've given our lives to Him.