**Isaiah 65:17-25 (Miranda)**

**17For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. 19I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. 20No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. 21They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord— and their descendants as well. 24Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.**

**1 Corinthians 15:12 (19?)-26 (Miranda)**

**12Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? 13If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; 14and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. 15We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. 17If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. 19If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

**20But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 21For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.26The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

**Message:**

**Do you believe in the supernatural? Do you believe in a God who has the power to effect miracles? Can the dead rise?**

**1 Corinthians 15 is Paul’s great chapter where he summarized the early church’s thinking on the resurrection of Jesus. Paul himself had a vision of the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, and that turned his life around.**

**In the first century world was no question of the supernatural. People flocked to temples of many different God’s, the Emperor was increasingly seen to be divine and to be worshipped. The cultural air they breathed was of a supernatural world.**

**Some, in line with the views of the Jewish group the Sadducees, didn’t believe in the resurrection. Jesus himself on this one sided with the Pharisees who did believe in the resurrection.**

**It depends on your starting point. Modern Rationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries, led by the scientific method, had no place for the supernatural. Primitive people might believe in it, but we know better. There are no miracles apart from miracles of science, and so Jesus didn’t give sight to the blind, or raise Lazarus from the tomb and he certainly didn’t rise from the dead.**

**A delay in the return of Christ in the eyes of early Christians possibly led to doubt as to whether Jesus really rose from the dead. However, Paul asserts (verse 3): 3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. For him it was of first importance that not only did Jesus die, he also rose again – and this was a bodily resurrection.**

**His language is pretty severe. In rejecting the resurrection of Christ, he wrote, then: 17’If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. 19If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.’**

**That’s pretty “in your face” isn’t it! In Romans Paul wrote that whatever is not of faith is sin, so, whatever your belief system is, be true to it, be consistent in it.**

**If you believe that all that exists is what science can prove, then be consistent in your thinking and application of it. For myself, I believe in a physical resurrection and so I’m with Paul in this old fashioned belief. I have seen just in recent days little glimpses of answered prayer and moments of being empowered by God to serve Him. Every week starts afresh with the belief that God has something for us as we gather for worship and, I have never encountered a week where I have nothing come Sunday. I put this down to a God who is actively and personally involved in my life, and so I am on the side of a supernatural God.**

**Now we are going to look at the new life which the resurrection brings. Or put another way the hope we have in Christ for this life. Paul wrote that is we only believe in Christ in this life then we are most of all people to be pitied, but in reality while we may be holding out to be counted among the fruits of Christ’s resurrection and to live eternally with him, in reality, we do want to see the Kingdom of God present in the here and now.**

**We read how Jesus is reigning until all his enemies are under his feet, subdued, the last enemy being death. What does the progressive, reign of Christ mean?**

**Our Isaiah reading looks to the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The passing away of many aspects of the world we now know. It outlines a hope for the new world.**

**God, through Isaiah, encouraged the people centuries before Jesus to see the new creation of Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. Jerusalem was the centre of God’s activity from the temple. Today we have no temple to look to but we are God’s people in whom he delights. What does God delighting in his people mean?**

**It means the end of grief and suffering; ‘no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.’**

**It means the end of what we might see as injustice. 20No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.**

**Injustice might not be the right word, but when a person dies early or unexpectedly, there is a sense of injustice which is felt. A child dies in a car accident, or a whole family is wiped out randomly, needlessly, there is a rightful mourning that: its just not right!**

**It means a rightful reward for one’s labours. 21They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord— and their descendants as well.**

**Israel knew only too well what it meant to be attacked and to have land taken off them. Marauding tribes would periodically take land on their borders and so they would plant a vineyard and others would reap the benefits of it. Today we have unprecedented numbers of people living in refugee camps, driven from their land and others occupying their homes. We know of the borders around Burma and Syria as just 2 examples.**

**It means an open relationship with God. 24Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.  This for me is a picture of an open and close relationship where, God and individual, one knows the other’s heart intimately.**

**It means an end to warfare and violence. 25The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.**

**The wolf is an image of a predator and a lamb as the prey. Or, the bully and the victim. Today we know that nations still go to war with nations – but I guess, only if they believe they can win. Today large companies prey on the consumers of their services and products. Today, services which have a brief to help people in need, seem often to worsen not improve people’s plight.**

**Some might say, all that the new creation is all in the future. We cannot hope for it in the old earth and old heavens, however, if this is what the new world of God looks like then this should be our commitment (later we will pray your will be done on earth as it is in heaven0. We cannot just sit back and watch while we wait for Christ to return.**

**This becomes our mission in the name of Christ – to see the end of suffering and grief. To see and end of injustice. To see that people have the reward they deserve for their labours and to see an end to warfare, violence, bullying and exploitation. A world where people are not hurt or destroyed.**

**For me, I believe in the resurrection of Christ. God is making all things new. Christ will ultimately reign over all his enemies (which are also ours). We’ve seen a picture today of new life, it is our role together as the body of Christ to make that vision ours as well.**

**Consider, what is one situation which I can work with Christ to bring in something of the new creation?**

**Prayer of response**