

What do we believe about ... **The Future?**

Future
Church
Christian
living faith
love eternal
faith
Judgement
power God holy
authority
Jesus new life
wholeness
resurrection
disciples
reborn
calling
believe
Relations
joining raised



The
United
Reformed
Church

What do we believe about **The Future?**

Resurrection

One of the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith is that Jesus Christ, after an agonising death on the cross, was raised from the dead and appeared to his disciples. The resurrection was the seal that God and humankind were reconciled with each other, that sin was forgiven and that God had reordered creation back to God's original intention. At Union in 1972, the United Reformed Church stressed belief in resurrection as sealing Christ's status as Son of God who lives and reigns for ever:

We believe that God, in his infinite love for men [sic.], gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who became man, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead and lives for evermore, saviour, judge and king.

In 1997, when making a Statement of Faith in gender-inclusive language, the United Reformed Church confirmed Jesus' eternal reign and role in salvation in this way:

We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh; who lived our human life, died for sinners on the cross; who was raised from the dead, and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God; who lives eternally, as saviour and sovereign, coming in judgement and mercy, to bring us to eternal life.



In the New Testament, we see a link between Jesus' death and resurrection and our own lives. Jesus told his disciples that his experience would have implications for them and others: 'I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die' (John 11:25-26). Paul saw Jesus' resurrection as an anticipation of a wider resurrection: 'But

in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died' (1 Corinthians 15:20). And this is sealed in baptism: 'We were buried with him in his death, so as he was raised, we too might live a new life' (Romans 6:4).

'Jesus' resurrection seals for us a future when we, too, will be raised.'

Jesus' resurrection seals for us a future when we, too, will be raised. Following resurrection, there is judgement: 'For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil' (2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus taught about such judgement too, in the 'Parable of the Sheep and the Goats' (Matthew 25:31-46). But it is central to Christian faith that we can approach judgement with hope and confidence because

'We look to the future with hope for eternal life.'



of Christ. As Paul put it 'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:38-39).

We look to the future with hope for eternal life.

The Kingdom of God

The Christian hope is not simply for a future of perfected individuals. Hope for personal wholeness and the renewal of creation impacts our living in the present when we live responsibly, working for wholeness and healing and living hope to see it.



Alongside this, we hold to the promise of a redeemed creation. The gospels refer to this as ‘the kingdom (or rule) of God’. In its fullness, the kingdom will have come when God’s whole creation is redeemed and restored to its original goodness. When harmony and blessing reign and ‘Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away’ (Revelation 21:4).

In the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, the promise of the kingdom is made real: ‘Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news”’ (Mark 1:14-15).

‘God’s Kingdom will come in its fullness in the future’

But this kingdom, already come in Jesus, had not yet come in its fullness. Jesus taught his disciples to pray ‘your kingdom come’ (Luke 11:26). Jesus seals to us the promise that God’s Kingdom will come in its fullness in the future: ‘Then comes the end when [Christ] hands over the kingdom of God to the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power; for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet’ (1 Corinthians 15:24).

The Christian hope for the future is that the whole of creation will be renewed, ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Revelation 21:1). We look to the future, then, with hope that God’s will for the whole creation will be restored and fulfilled and God is ‘all in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Cosmic Renewal

The New Testament teaches that the future for which we hope will be inaugurated by the return of Jesus (Matthew 24:30, Revelation 1:17). Christ’s second coming will restore God’s

‘We believe Jesus is coming back.’

original purposes for the whole of creation. Jesus said these assuring words to his disciples, “And if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3). We believe Jesus is coming back. His second coming is the most important thing to know and believe about the future.



This is one in a series of booklets about the United Reformed Church. The booklets can be read and downloaded at www.urc.org.uk/believe



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