

# THE FUTURE

The Christian message is propelled by this truth: The future has been decided.  
Not in any programmatic, deterministic manner.  
But in glorious liberated technicolour.

And what does the future look like?

It looks like Justice

It looks like Beauty

It looks like Freedom

It looks like Love

It looks like Holiness without  
Self-Righteousness or Bigotry  
Plenty without Greed or Envy  
Satisfaction without the sour aftertaste of Regret.

In short - the future looks like:

Life of such richness, quality and verve,

That it's eternal nature will never be a burden to those who share in it.

The future is a story in which  
in the words of CS Lewis from *The Last Battle*  
"every chapter is better than the one before."

And why can I say this with confidence?

Because the future looks like Jesus.

The Bible message does not slip neatly into the category of religion

It explodes with the daring truth

- abhorrent to the modern mindset

- anathema to the myth of progress -

That the future has been decided...

*Not by any technological or moral effort we undertake in the present,*

*Not by any revolutionary uprising that offers liberation*

*Nor by any ideology sucked into the vortex of the mass killings of the 20th century*

## THE FUTURE

But by one seismic event 2000 years ago  
*that changed the course of human history*  
*shapes our lives in the present*  
*And will usher in our final outcome.*

This earthquake - this tsunami - was  
The historical death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth  
A tri-part phenomenon guaranteeing a Jesus-shaped future.  
The future looks like Jesus.

Let me - literally - flesh this out.

By the time of Jesus - Jewish hopes for the future hinged  
on three things  
- *God's judgement for human rebellion and all its dire consequences*  
- *the resurrection of the body, not simply a disembodied soul existence*  
- *the ushering in of the Spirit Age - which would renew the whole creation*

Judgement - Resurrection - the Spirit.

To their astonishment Jesus first Jewish disciples discovered that in Jesus  
all of these future hopes were realised now!  
The future had begun - even while the present remained.

How?

1. God's *future judgement* for human rebellion took place at the cross and in the death of Jesus

2. The *future resurrection* of the body commenced when Jesus was resurrected (not resuscitated)  
Through death into a new life never to be touched by death again.  
Jesus resurrection body is the prototype of what is to come for us.

3. The *future Spirit Age* began when the ascended  
Jesus poured out God's life-giving Spirit on his disciples on the Day of Pentecost  
Enabling them, while still in their old creation bodies, to live as spiritually new people.

## THE FUTURE

Like some three-stranded cosmic bungee cord  
The future has been dragged into the present and now pulls  
Us inexorably towards its fulfillment.

Christians call it - the Now and Not Yet.  
The tension of something  
Commenced but not completed  
Guaranteed, but not paid out in full.

So when will the future be completed  
When will the final payment be made?

With the return of Jesus.  
Not as humble carpenter/rabbi/teacher  
But as resurrected ruler of the universe Jesus  
In whose hands God has placed the future.  
My future  
Your future  
The universe's future.

\*\*\*\*\*

# THE FUTURE

Three major differences:

- A Repentant Life
- A Renewed Life
- A Restoring Life

**First:** A Repentant life

Christian Repentance means changing our disposition and attitude towards

Any future that is not Jesus-shaped.

On a *global* level Jesus is returning as King and Judge  
Injustice/bondage/ugliness and hate  
have no future.

We love that idea.

But on a *personal* level Jesus is returning as King and Judge

So if our future is not focussed on

Oriented towards

And bound up in Jesus

WE have no future

Not in the way I described it anyway.

Jesus will shape our futures

Either

Towards life and fulfillment

Experiencing the future

With joy and increasing anticipation

Or

Towards death and dissatisfaction

Experiencing the future

With anguish and increasing despair

# THE FUTURE

## 2: A Renewed Life

The New Testament letters are written  
To Christian communities whose lives are to reflect  
their repentance.  
Christians are to live the future - today!

The ethics of the New Testament

- Loving people
- Serving people
- Forgiving people
- Humility rather than self-promotion
- Holy self-restraint rather than "follow your heart"

Are not Utilitarianism with a religion gloss.  
No - Christian ethics are localised present experiences  
Of a globalised, future reality.

Christian communities love  
Because the future is loving others  
Christian communities serve  
Because the future is serving others  
Christian communities are humble  
Because the future is humble.

Self-loving, self-serving pride  
Is our vain attempt to shape a future apart from Jesus.

Not every Christian community *does* look like this  
But that every Christian community *should* like for this  
Indeed it has been empowered to do so!

Any community calling itself Christian  
Not actively seeking and practicing these things is in  
Denial of the future.

# THE FUTURE

## 3. A Restoring Life

Christians live restorative lives

If the future looks like justice  
Then working for justice - lawyers/magistrates/civil rights  
is a restorative act - not simply a great career.

If the future looks like love  
Then involvement  
In the caring and not-for-profit sectors  
Is a restorative act

If the future looks like holiness  
Then helping with addictions, broken lives and broken communities  
Is a restorative act

If the future looks like plenty without greed  
Then ethical banking, wise economics and honest brokering  
Is a restorative act - not simply an opportunity to make money

But most of all  
If the future looks like Jesus  
Then what I am doing right now  
Exhorting you to repent and  
To live a renewed life  
is the ultimate restorative act that Christians can do  
Because it is the only one that offers you a future worth waiting for.