

**Ashes to Ashes
&
Dust to Dust**

Why do people go to church to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday? Ashes remind people of their mortality. Anyone who has ever attended an Ash Wednesday service has heard, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

We are going to look at those reasons dispensationally to see if Ash Wednesday is something we want to observe.

Our bodies are mortal, we are not. God formed our bodies out of the dust of the ground.

Genesis 2:7

And **the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The curse of Adam was that working the ground (to grow things to eat,) would be difficult, and then he would return to the ground as dust.

Genesis 3:19

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, **till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast**

thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Throughout the Old Testament, there are constant reminders that man's bodies are dust. Abraham said that he was dust and ashes.

Genesis 18:27

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, **I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:**

Job talks about himself as pottery. He was made as the clay and will go back to dust.

Job 10:9

Remember, I beseech thee, **that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?**

Both man's and animals' bodies will return to the dust that they came from.

Job 34:15

All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

God knows best that our bodies are dust.

Psalms 103:14

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

God gives good things to man and animals, but when He takes away their breath, their bodies return to dust. We cannot live without God.

Psalms 104:28-29

That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Solomon, too, tells us that both man's and animal's bodies return to the dust of the earth.

Ecclesiastes 3:20

All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

The physical bodies return to the earth but the good news is that the spirits of man and animals return to God.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Isaiah told believing Israel that their dead bodies will live again. The earth shall cast out the dead. You can tell Isaiah is talking about believers because they will awake and sing.

Isaiah 26:19

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.**

Daniel wrote that believers will awake to everlasting life. Unbelievers will have to endure everlasting shame and contempt.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Job understood that man's mortality and sinfulness would be overcome by a redeemer.

Job 19:25-26

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: **And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:**

The description of the faithful of Israel getting their resurrection bodies is found in Ezekiel. It is the story of the dry bones. God is literally going to put them back together and breathe life into them.

Ezekiel 37:4-6, 10-12

Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, **I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay**

sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus **saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.**

But Now...

Ashes are also the sign of mourning and repentance. It is significant that the words “ashes” and “dust” do not appear in Paul’s letters. Remember, Paul is our apostle and we are to follow him, because he was given instruction by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 14:37

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, **let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.**

Paul’s letters to believers, written after Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection for our sins, assure us of our complete and total forgiveness from sin and death.

Romans 6:14-18

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to

obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? **But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.**

In this dispensation, given to Paul, believers are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The Holy Ghost dwells in every believer's heart. We are children of God, joint-heirs with Christ Himself! We will be glorified together with Christ!

Romans 8:8-9

⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

We are already seated with Christ in heavenly places! This is a lot different than reminding us that we are dust, and we will return to dust!

Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.**

We know that it is our mortal bodies that are keeping us here on this earth. They need to be planted in the earth, to become the bodies that we will have when Christ meets us in the clouds.

1 Corinthians 15:35-38

But some man will say, **How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:** And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, **it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:** But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Paul explains how our bodies will be changed. Now, they are corrupt, but they will be raised incorruptible. Now, they are dishonorable, but they will be raised in glory. Now, they are weak, but they will become powerful, and now, they are natural but will become spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

So also is the resurrection of the dead. **It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.** There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Our bodies will become like the glorious body that Jesus had after His resurrection.

Philippians 3:20-21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, **the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,** according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

All of these changes to our bodies will be done in a moment.

1 Corinthians 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

Paul's emphasis is not on us being dust, and returning to dust. It is on rejoicing!

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice evermore.

We will be rewarded for rejoicing. The Crown of Rejoicing is one of the rewards given at the Judgement Seat of Christ, where we are in His presence.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what is our hope, or joy, or **crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?**

Paul's message, over and over, is that we no longer have to worry about sin. We are freed from it because of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 6:22

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

We have been given the free gift of everlasting life.

Romans 5:18

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; **even so by**

the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

When you understand that Paul's letters are Jesus Christ's message of salvation for us today, it makes observances like Ash Wednesday, focusing on mourning, shame, and sin, something to be avoided. There are many churches that misunderstand the freedom and liberty that come from the forgiveness of all sin that Christ achieved by His death, burial, and resurrection for our sins. Christ paid for our sins, in full. There is no need to continue to dwell on them when we could be helping others understand God's grace and love. We can rejoice evermore!