

Nature of the Resurrection Life

by Ian Murray

The resurrection life is a life of unchanging glory, of deathless glory, where there is a new degree of life and blessedness, new senses, and new capacities to worship and serve the living God.

Duration: 32:30

Scripture: Luke 20:27

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Resurrection Hope"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of death, sin, and the law in relation to the victory given by God through Jesus Christ. It also explores the topic of marriage and the resurrection, highlighting that those who are worthy will not marry or die anymore but will be equal to angels and children of God. The transcript references episodes in the Gospel of Luke where the Pharisees and Sadducees tried to silence Jesus' ministry. It concludes with the assurance that Christians are moving towards the light and resurrection, and emphasizes the importance of unity and hope in the church.

Transcript

Let us hear the word of God, as it is written in the Gospel of Luke, the twentieth chapter, and from the twenty-seventh verse, the Gospel of Luke, chapter twenty, and from verse twenty-seventh, and then the concluding verses of the fifteenth chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Commencing to read in Luke, chapter twenty, and at verse twenty-seventh, Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which denied that there is any resurrection. And they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

There were therefore seven brothers, and the first took a wife, and died without children, and the second took her to wife, and he died childless, and the third took her, and in like manner the seven or so, and they left no children, and died. Last of all, the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife.

And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage, but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, that he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master thou hast well said, and after that they doth not ask him any question at all. And in the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, the first epistle, the fifteenth chapter, and from verse fifty-one, verse fifty-one, Behold I show 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. The words of our text are in the Gospel of Luke, in the passage read, the twentieth chapter, and particularly from verses 34 to 36. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage, but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

We have in this chapter in Luke's Gospel, brought together a series of episodes in Jerusalem, where the Pharisees and then the Sadducees attempted to silence the ministry of our Lord. And they did this not so much as by force at this time, but rather by the men who came to Christ with questions, with difficulties, with problems. And the purpose of these questions was not to gain information from Christ, but rather to render His teaching absurd or ridiculous in the eyes of the people.

And if at your leisure you read the earlier part of this chapter, you will find how our Lord, when He was preaching with great authority and influence in the temple courts, was thus interrupted by these men. First of all the Sadducees, who came with various questions, by what authority did He preach they said. Then again, was it right to pay their taxes unto Caesar or not? That was a problem they had.

If of course He said it was right to pay tax to Caesar, He would antagonize the people. If He said it was not right, they could summon Him before the Roman power. By such questions the Pharisees pressed our Lord.

And as you will see earlier, entirely without success, they were utterly confounded and silenced by Him. And then the Sadducees become a part of this attempt to silence our Lord. They had of course heard what had taken place and the way in which the Pharisees had been treated.

But they now come in order to do what the Pharisees had failed to do. Now bear in mind of course that there was a wide distinction between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Certainly they were both enemies of the Gospel of Christ.

But between them there was this wide difference in respect to religion. The Pharisees of course were the traditional party, they were the upholders of all their elaborate codes of ethics and of conduct and of many other things. They professed to adhere to the Word of God, but they had overlaid the Word of God with a

great deal of their own.

But the Sadducees were not like that. They were enlightened as they like to think. They were men who applied the use of reason to belief.

And the result of their reason was that they had not only cast aside the superstitions of the Pharisees, but with it they had cast aside also a great deal of the Word of God. They were materialists. They did not believe in the survival of man after death.

And as Luke tells us in verse 27 here, they denied that there was any resurrection. They come to our Lord then with this question. A question upon the basis of which they believed they could demonstrate the absurdity of our Lord's teaching.

They knew what our Lord taught with respect to the life after death. The teaching of Jesus was that the grave is not the final resting place of the body. He preached that not only would the spirit survive death, but a day was coming when spirit and body would be reunited.

Heaven and hell in the preaching of our Lord will not be inhabited by disembodied spirits, by disembodied souls, but they will be inhabited eternally by those who are raised from the dead. The hour is coming, he had preached in Jerusalem, that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth. They that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation.

I say then that the Sadducees were perfectly aware that this was our Lord's preaching. And because they were aware of it, they come with this particular question. They begin by quoting the word of God from the book of Deuteronomy chapter 25.

That portion of scripture where there was laid down a certain provision to prevent the extinction of families in the tribes of Israel at that period of history. It was part of the mosaic economy that regulations were laid down to preserve the tribes and those families until the purposes of God had been completed for that dispensation of history. And the verses that they quote as you see, refer to the fact that if brethren were dwelling together and an elder brother was married, supposing he should die without children being born, then the next brother being unmarried should take the widow and they be married and the first child of that union would be named after the deceased father and thus preserve that name.

The Sadducees take this portion of scripture and upon it they bring to our Lord the instance of a case where not only was a woman thus married to an elder brother but in turn successively she married no less than seven brethren. And in each case the husband died before a child was born and then of course at length she also died. Here then they say to Jesus, here is the problem that we have.

Supposing there is a resurrection. In the resurrection, verse 33, whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife. How could she be the wife of one and not the wife of them all for she was equally related to all seven brethren.

It is this question which our Lord uses not only to demonstrate the ignorance of the Sadducees but to give us here in this portion of scripture some of the most marvellous words on the nature of the resurrection life. And that is the subject which I want to draw your attention to in the time that we have together in this morning worship. The nature of the resurrection life.

But you will notice that our Lord's reply falls into two parts and we should take it in that way. There are first of all certain things which he says concerning the error in the thinking of the Sadducees. And then positively he speaks of the life of the resurrection.

Taking them then in that order, let us note the two errors which our Lord exposes in the thinking of the Sadducees. In the first place, for the sake of argument as you note the Sadducees were willing to assume a resurrection. But the belief which they assume is not the belief which is taught in the scripture nor the teaching of our Lord but it is that which was so common amongst the Jews and which was taught by the Pharisees namely But if a man were a Jew, if he went to the synagogue if he paid his tithes to the priesthood and so on then when the end came surely the benefits and the privileges of the life to come would be his.

The way that they speak suggests at once that that was what they were assuming. Here were seven brethren, they were all Jews a woman also who was married to them. Well if there are to be any benefits in the resurrection state they must surely belong to them all.

And the first error which our Lord rejects is their supposition that men could look forward universally men generally could look forward to the life after death. Notice the sharp distinction which he draws in verses 34 and 35 Jesus answering said unto them the children of this world marry and are given in marriage. That is something general, that is something universal in this world but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead and then he goes on but he has immediately particularized he has excluded at once a great multitude and he has begun to speak of those who would be accounted worthy to obtain that world.

There is more than one world that is involved after death. There is a world of blessedness and glory and heaven but a world also of woe and endless misery. And then our Lord adds to that by this statement and the resurrection from the dead.

That is to say not all will be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead and the emphasis falls upon the definite article the resurrection. We have already said that there will be a resurrection which is universal. Those that sleep in the dust of the earth says the book of Daniel shall awake some to shame and some to everlasting content.

There will be a resurrection preached the apostle Paul of the unjust. There will be a resurrection said Jesus to condemnation. Resurrection as a fact will be universal but the resurrection of which Jesus speaks here is the resurrection to glory and to life.

Just as the apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3 when he speaks of knowing Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection if he says, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Paul longed for that goal which is the Christian hope of the resurrection that is the resurrection to life and to glory. And what Jesus says at once here is that this resurrection and that world of resurrection glory is a world to which only some will be accounted worthy.

And he does not here stop to cast pearls before swine. He does not here stop to tell the Sadducees what they ought already to have known who would be accounted worthy. Whosoever he said on another occasion whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

Whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him that sent him I will raise him up at the last day. You will find my friends as I trust you know written large in the Gospels the character of those who will be raised to glory. They depend upon the merits upon the obedience of Christ.

They do good in Christ's name. They love holiness. They repent of sin.

They have broken and contrite hearts. They are those who look to the Saviour and who die in faith in Christ. They will be raised and they only to glory.

Let us pass on then from that first error and yet how common it is in our churches, in our world today the supposition that if there is to be any benefit after death well if we have been religious if we have been to church if we have given our support then surely all will be well with us. That is not what would be in the word of God. The second error of the Sadducees is even more fundamental.

Their question displays their complete ignorance of the vast difference between life in this world and the resurrection life. They speak as though the same conditions must exist in heaven as they do now and as though the resurrection state must be a kind of continuation of present relations a continuation of present conditions. And the great fallacy in their question is pointed out by our Lord when he says as recorded in another gospel he said at this point ye do err not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.

Such is God's power that he is not only able to raise the dead but he will raise the dead with new senses with new capabilities to a new condition of life and of glory. Flesh and blood says the scripture cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That is to say our body as presently constituted could not enter into that resurrection life but God by his own transcendent power will raise the dead and he will raise his people changed and transformed into the very likeness of the risen Christ.

There is to be says the scripture this vast and stupendous change. And there could therefore be no greater fallacy than supposing that when we think of the life to come and the life of the resurrection we are to think of something that is a mere continuation of this present life and its relationships. It is not so.

Let us never forget that the scriptures make clear when they speak of the resurrection of the body they make clear two things. First that the body is to be raised and there is to be a continuity in identity between these present bodies and the bodies that shall be. When Paul speaks of this he says this mortal, this mortal must put on immortality.

This corruption must put on incorruption. There is a continuing identity and yet at the same time there is a statement of the stupendous change which is to be wrought. We will be raised but raised to a new degree of life and of blessedness with new senses and new capacities to worship and to serve the living God.

So much then for their second error. May we in a moment before we leave it just comment on the fact that our Lord is not here speaking of the termination of all personal relationships in the world to come. It could be that at a cursory glance at this passage someone might suppose that our Lord is saying here that in this life yes we have these close bonds and friendships and social fellowships but in this life to come all that will be done away.

That is not what he is teaching. Not at all. He is teaching here that earthly relationships as such will not survive death.

Not even the divine institution of marriage will survive death. But he is not passing any comment upon the glorious truth that heaven will bring together the great multitudes of the redeemed of all lands and of all centuries. They shall come as he himself preached from the east and the west and the north and the south and they shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in his kingdom.

There will be personal social fellowship and joy amongst the redeemed. This indeed is the comfort of the Christian gospel that them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. And so says the apostle to the Christians of Thessalonica.

And so we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds and so we shall be forever together with the Lord. And there could be no greater error surely than to suppose that in heaven we will be some kind of anonymous blanks that we shall be strangers. That there will be an end of all personal fellowship.

My friends that is not so. But rather the contrary. The grace of brotherly love which is now found in the saints but found in us only imperfectly.

That grace will be perfected. The saints will be together in glory as they never could be upon earth. How easily do we give way to misunderstandings and to suspicions and to things that bring division amongst the people of God.

But all that will be done away. Part of the wonder of heaven will be the unity of the fellowship of the people of God. In the dark ages of the church, Bernard of Clairvaux in the middle ages looking around him and seeing apostasy and death, looked upwards and wrote those beautiful words, I know not, oh I know not what social joys are there, what radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.

And it is part of the comfort of the Christian that he also is to look up to a day when the church will be perfect and complete. That then lest any misunderstand what our Lord is saying. Human relationships as such will not survive death.

But every relationship which has been forged in the grace of Christ, all who have been united to Him, they will survive death together. Now in the last place, just a few words on what our Lord says positively on the life of the resurrection. Let us take in these amazing words with which He begins verse 36.

Neither can they die anymore. There is a statement that the resurrection life is a life of unchanging glory, of deathless glory. Neither can they die anymore.

And you notice that these words are introduced as a confirmation of the difference between the earthly life, the earthly state, and the life of the resurrection. But there is also it seems to me, some link of thought between what our Lord has just said in verse 35 on the end of marriage, the termination of marriage, and the end of death. You see how He says in verse 35 they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Neither can they die anymore. And what can the relationship be between the end of marriage and the deathless state of eternity? I think we can say this much in the few moments we have. Let us recall the purpose of marriage in the whole divine economy.

When God created the angelic world, He created all the hosts of light simultaneously at the word of His power. That is not how He created man. But from our first parents, it was His purpose that mankind should come into being in successive generations throughout all the years of history, that the earth should be

replenished, that families and through families, other generations should come.

That was the very heart of the divine providential purpose in matrimony. Add to that the fact of sin. Marriage, as we know, was prior to sin.

But when sin entered a new, a vastly different feature also entered. With sin came death. With sin came infirmity and age and disease and pain and then at last, earthly separation.

And so into every family and into every home there came empty places. There were breaches made. Death entered and death will enter and must enter into every home.

And yet by that institution of matrimony and marriage, God's purposes continued. Mankind was still perpetuated and the influences of the Holy Spirit and the saving work of Christ is brought to bear upon generations and it may be generations yet unborn. And from these generations are gathered in the hosts who will make up all the redeemed.

And then when the end comes, when the trumpet shall sound, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death and then marriage will be done away because its purpose will have been fulfilled. There will be no breaches in the family of heaven. There will be no empty places there.

There will be no infirmity and no graves that will sunder the people of God. They will not marry, says our Lord. There will be no need of that blessing.

And he goes on, neither will they die any more. Well our time is gone, but what are we to say by way of application on these things? Let us my friends remember from these words that when we think of those who have died in Christ, we are not to think of seeing them again as they left us. They left us in pain and in sorrow and in weariness.

And however much we may attempt to dress the dead, death is a fearful thing. And the remembrance of the passing of our loved ones in Christ is something often that brings pain and grief. But I say we shall not see them as they left us.

We shall see them in the likeness of Christ. We shall see them as children of the resurrection. We should learn also from this passage that we are in this present life engaged not in some uncertain struggle.

Not in something of which the outcome we cannot predict. But we are moving steadily towards the day when God will raise the dead. When he will judge.

When he will bring together his people in absolute holiness. And therefore we should as the apostle Paul be realizing that the less there is of time left to us, the more joy ought to be ours. The night is far spent and the day is at hand.

And when as Richard Baxter was asked when he was dying how he was, when he replied I am almost well. That is how every Christian should think. We are almost well.

We are moving towards the light and towards the resurrection. Do you know I believe there is no greater evangelism than the evangelism which has come to the church in days of bitter persecution when men and women have died at the stake and they have not needed to go around witnessing as we call it in inverted commas, but their lives have so declared their hope and their knowledge and their assurance that the ears of other people have been opened to ask the reason of the hope that is in them. And I am afraid

that one reason why we are so feverishly and panically engaged sometimes in what we call witnessing is that there is so little in the church that makes people realize that here are people who are bound for eternity who have assurance and who rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And if we were but baptized more fully with the influences of the Holy Spirit that which we have been considering and that which is written so large in the Scripture would be seen more clearly in us. May God grant that it may be so. Amen.

Amen. O Lord our gracious God, we thank Thee for Him who is the resurrection and the life and we pray that we may be drawn closer to Him, to the knowledge of His sufferings, to the power of His resurrection. Grant that Thy Word may abide in our hearts and give to us this day Thy holy presence that we may know Thee and that we may all together rejoice in Thee.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all evermore. Amen.

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