

The Dew of Resurrection

by Tom Macartney

Christians are called to live as oases of life in the desert, marked by the dew of resurrection, a distinguishing mark of their witness to the risen Lord.

Scripture: Genesis 3:19, Malachi 4:2, Luke 20:36, John 4:10, Acts 4:2, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:3, 1 Peter 1:3

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Resurrection Life"

Description

Tom Macartney preaches about Christians living in a spiritual desert, emphasizing the importance of being satisfied by the living water of life and demonstrating this satisfaction through evergreen lives and vibrant churches. He delves into the significance of dew as an emblem of resurrection, highlighting how Christians are called to be oases of life in a dying world, marked by the dew of resurrection and the witness of unity. The sermon explores various Bible references to dew, connecting it with God's life-giving blessing, the freshness of spiritual food in Christ, and the dew of His presence for soul restoration.

Transcript

As Christians we live in a spiritual desert, in a world without that living water which alone can satisfy the thirsty heart of man. It is sad to see the many ways in which our race of rebels seeks in vain to satisfy this thirst. It is our privilege, if we belong to the Lord, not only to drink of the satisfying water of life ourselves, but to demonstrate our satisfaction by evergreen lives and as living churches, to be oases of life in the desert. Let us now consider another picture of this, the dew, the dew of heaven.

Though seldom seen in this country because of the climate, how beautiful, how refreshing is the sight of sparkling dew as the sun rises - the newness, the freshness, the feel of resurrection. The dew has been called an emblem of resurrection, the dew of resurrection', and this we shall find is its chief significance. The Lord Jesus called those belonging to Him, sons of the resurrection. Christians are such in a world marked by death. The dew of resurrection is a distinguishing mark of the Christian as he witnesses to his risen Lord and shows forth His triumph over death in this dying world.

Bearing this in mind, let us note first some references to dew. When Elijah challenged Ahab, he said, "There shall be neither dew nor rain these years." In the rainless summer months the dew played a crucial part in Palestine in sustaining the vegetation and preventing disaster. Then, in Isaac's prophetic blessing of Jacob, the first thing mentioned is: "God give you of the dew of heaven," while in his prophecy concerning Esau, there is no mention of God, and his destiny is, "Away from the dew of heaven" (as many versions have it). Here, and elsewhere, the dew is a symbol of God's life-giving blessing, given or

withheld.

Then, we note how the descent of the dew is linked with the coming of the manna - "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night the manna fell with it", thereby it has been suggested giving the manna a peculiar sparkle. Now we know from John 6 that the manna foreshadowed God's Son, the true and living bread of God, sent from heaven that we may live. The link with the dew suggests among other things, the freshness of our spiritual food, Christ. There is nothing tinned, frozen or stale provided by the Lord. This is a helpful guide to truly nourishing spiritual food. Is our daily Bible reading fresh and tasty? Are the messages we hear sparkling with dew?

Then, we read in Hosea 14: 4, 5, concerning the faithless yet repentant people of God: "I will heal their waywardness, I will love them freely, ... I will be like the dew to Israel." Here is the dew of His presence with its life-giving, soul-restoring properties.

Then, in Micah 5:7. (in the passage containing the prophecy of the coming of the Shepherd-King to Bethlehem), we read concerning His people: "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord." What a remarkable visual image this gives us of the Christian's and the church's calling in this drought-stricken world. Psalm 133 expands on this: "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ... It is like the dew of Hermon ... falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life for evermore." Which reminds us of what the Lord Jesus said, "By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." This link between the dew and the witness of the unity of the Lord's people is challenging. How sad it is that our witness, in the eyes of this warring and divided world, is so marred by our disunity. May we know much more of the dew of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Finally, in Psalm 110 (the Psalm most quoted in the New Testament), which reveals the central place, as King and Priest, occupied by God's Son, the Lord Jesus, in God's eternal plan, we find those who freely enlist under Him to make Him King likened to the dew, their armour glittering in the sunshine perhaps, in the poetic imagery of verse 3. May we be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Now we return to the chief significance of the dew, as an emblem of resurrection. Our title, 'The Dew of Resurrection', is based on Isaiah 26:19. We give a free rendering, based on a number of versions - "Your dead shall live! ... you who dwell in the dust of death, awake and sing for joy! ... for Your dew, Lord, is like the sparkling, life-giving dew in the light of dawn, and the earth shall give up its dead!" Note, this verse comes soon after another verse about resurrection - "He shall swallow up death for ever." (Isaiah 25:8). The vibrant hope of resurrection seems to burst through the immediate context in these two passages. (We must remember that Old Testament believers only had a limited understanding of the resurrection and the life to come, for the resurrection of Christ still lay in the future.)

What a remarkable verse this is! The dust of death is overcome by the dew of God, the dew of resurrection life. In hot Eastern lands dust is the natural symbol of death. The horror of death is pictured as the horror of dust; deep, dark and suffocating dust. When sin entered into the world, death entered - "For dust you are and to dust you shall return." Over this dark scene is set the coming of the dawn, the rising sun, with the shining liquid lustre of the dew, giving life to everything. What a picture of the new day which has dawned, the new creation which has come in God's Son! In Him, Christians are sons of the resurrection, and should be marked out in this dead world by the dew of resurrection.

In 1 Corinthians 15, that great chapter on the resurrection, we read that, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Now if death is man's last and worst enemy, and it is because it makes life a huge tragedy followed only by judgement, then resurrection and everlasting life must be man's first and best friend. This is why Christ's resurrection (and ours) is such an important part of the gospel message and our witness. His cross and resurrection have opened up for us a boundless future. United to Him, we have a living hope beyond this brief life and passing world. We know now a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, being made alive to God in a new creation in Christ, through new birth. We know something of the power of His resurrection over all the forces of death confronting us through the pressures of life. We know something of the dew of His resurrection, walking in newness of life and serving in newness of the Spirit - the freshness and sparkle of His life in us.

Many features of the Christian's life and testimony (such as good deeds) may be imitated by others who do not know the Lord, but the dew of resurrection cannot be. This is the peculiar mark and joy of the true Christian. A man may endure suffering without the Lord, with a stiff upper lip, but he cannot do so with inner peace joy and hope; there can be no sparkle. Hence the importance of this witness of the dew of resurrection life in this tragic world.

But how is this distinctive witness to be known in our experience? There is something mysterious about the coming of the dew (we are using the word to describe that sparkling condensation on a cooled surface); it seems to fall from heaven, so quietly, so gently, coming daily to challenge death. And yet, while there is mystery, there are conditions which govern its coming, the chief of which are:

(i) There must be sunshine during the day to warm the ground. So, we must be in a right relationship with the Lord as the Sun of righteousness (as sinners forgiven by grace through faith), if we are to know His healing, saving power (for the sun can also be a destructive power - our God is a consuming fire); and we must live daily in the sunshine of His presence, walking in the light with Him, with no clouds between.

(ii) There must also be moisture in the air. We must know Him as living water too, drinking daily of that spiritual rock, Christ. Note the Biblical balance of two essentials, sunshine and water. In deserts there is too little moisture; in moist climates insufficient sunshine; so there is no dew. Note this balance in Genesis 1. So it is in the new creation. Christ is both sunshine and living water.

(iii) But note also the vital part that night plays in the coming of the dew, to secure the essential change in temperature. When the sun goes down, under clear skies the ground loses its heat, so that the moisture in the air condenses on it. But for the night of testing there will be no dew in our lives. Our Sundays must be followed by our Mondays. Only in the new heaven and the new earth is there no night nor need for it. The ground must warm up by day and also cool down by night. If we insist on living in the sunshine all the time, trying to maintain a spiritual high and to avoid the night of testing, we shall know nothing of the dew of resurrection.

(iv) And there must be receptivity and response in the ground itself. We must take in the warmth of His love in grateful praise in the sunshine and give it back in trusting praise in the cold night of testing.

This then is how the dew of resurrection may be experienced. And as the amount of dew is determined by these conditions and varies from place to place, so it varies too among Christians.

Are not these things both an encouragement and a challenge? May our lives and churches be marked much more by the sparkling dew of His resurrection and victory over death that the world may see that He

is the risen Lord of all!

Bible references: Luke 20:36; John4:10-14; 13:35; Acts 4:2; Rom. 5:12; 6:4,11; 7:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; 2 Cor. 4:11; Eph. 2:8, 9; 3:20; 4:3; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 9:27; 12:29; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 14:4; 21:1, 25; Gen. 3:19; 27:28, 39; Exod. 16:13, 14; Num. 11:9; 1 Kings 17:1; 1 Chron. 11:10; Jer. 17:5-8; Mal. 4:2

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