



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

Mailing Address : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701
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April 12, 2009

Theme: The Resurrection and the Life

Text: John 11:21-26

The Resurrection and the Life
John 11:21-26

Introduction:

A. If death ends all, then evil must be good,

Wrong must be right, and beauty ugliness.

God is a Judas who betrays his Son,

And with a kiss, damns all the world to hell--

If Christ rose not again.

B. That haunting poem was penned by an unknown soldier killed in WWII. Its tone almost reminds us of Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 15:12-19 which begins, "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" and closes "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

C. Job, writing several thousand years ago articulated a question that has bothered mankind for centuries: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

D. Human beings are fascinated by the mystery of death. Rodin, the French master sculptor best know for "The Thinker," attempted to capture the emotions provoked by the first human death in a sculpture of Adam & Eve embracing the dead body of their son Abel. Instead of reflecting pain & sorrow, their faces seem inquisitive about the mystery of death.

E. Curiosity about death has persisted throughout the ages. And even more than this--a curiosity about life after death.

- As a background leading up to our text, allow me to summarize what has taken place so far:



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- Jesus is sent word that his dear friend Lazarus, the brother of both Mary & Martha, has become ill. After hearing of Lazarus' illness Jesus stayed where He was for two days, and then, along w/His disciples, headed for Bethany where Lazarus & his sisters lived. When they arrived in Bethany they were given the sad news that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Many had come to comfort Mary & Martha & to mourn over Lazarus' death. As Jesus approached, Martha heard that He was coming & ran out to meet Him. And that is where we pick up the story in vs.21

READ vss.21-26.

F. Today, as we consider Jesus' statement to Martha, our curiosity about death and the life after we'll be satisfied. 1st, let us notice that Jesus' statement brings the resurrection:

1. FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE LIGHT

A. The O.T. definitely speaks of the resurrection.

- In the O.T. account 3 persons were raised from the dead. In 1 Kings 17 we read that Elijah raised the widow of Zarephath's son from the dead by calling out to the Lord & then stretching himself across the boy 3 times.
- In 2 Kings 4 we read that Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son by laying on him until his body grew warm, & then lay on him again. The boy sneezed 7 times & opened his eyes--he was alive.
- In 2 Kings 13:21 we read of a man whose dead body was thrown into Elisha's tomb--when the body touched Elisha's bones it came to life & stood on its feet.
- Those are the only recorded accounts of resurrection taking place in the O.T.

2. The O.T. does teach of a future resurrection.

- Job wrote, 19:25-27 "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"
- David wrote in Psa 16:9-11 "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."
- In Isa 25:8 we read "he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces..." Again Isaiah says (26:19) "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for



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joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."

- If you will study these verses in light of the whole O.T. revelation you will see that they are not very clear or complete--that is, the teaching of resurrection has always been there, but it has been somewhat in the shadows.

B. Jesus brought the truth of the resurrection to the light.

- Jesus told Martha, "Your brother will rise again." Martha was aware of a coming resurrection for she said: READ v.24.
- Jesus answered, "I am the resurrection." By His teaching, His miracles, & His own resurrection, Jesus clearly taught the resurrection of the human body. He has declared once & for all that death is real, that there is life after death, and that the body will one day be raised by the power of God.

C. The N.T. teaches us that resurrected believers will be like the risen Christ.

1. 1 Cor 15:49 "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."

- Phil 3:21 "who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."
- 1 John 3:2 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Jesus brought from the shadows the truth that we who are in Christ will receive a body like His resurrection body.

2. What kind of body was Jesus' resurrection body?

- It was a body of flesh & bones. It was a body that retained the wounds of crucifixion. It was a body capable of eating fish around the fire w/His companions. But what made it different--& what will be different about our bodies--is that they will never die. The resurrection accounts of the O.T. as well as the N.T. were limited in that these people eventually died again. But the resurrection body we will receive will be like our Lord's in that it will never die. Jesus brought the resurrection from the shadows to the light.

Transition: Jesus' statement also brings the resurrection:



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3. FROM THE BOOK TO A PERSON

A. Through the years I have grown to love the Bible more & more. I am constantly amazed at the wonderful things God has chosen to reveal to us. Every time I read it I find something I didn't notice before. I stand in awe of a book compiled of 66 books, written over a time span of 1500 years, in 3 different languages, by 40 different authors from varying backgrounds, on 3 different continents--& yet it has complete agreement on every subject & doctrine it teaches. I have no trouble believing that a book such as this has the divine imprint of God on it--& for that I am grateful.

B. But sometimes I wish I could actually be there when different things it describes are taking place.

- I'd love to have been a witness to Adam & Eve's first day in the Garden. Or to have been w/ Moses & the Israelites when they crossed the Red Sea. Or to have been w/the prophet Elijah when he had his showdown w/the prophets of Baal. But most of all, I would like to have walked w/Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. I am somewhat envious of John who wrote in his first epistle concerning Jesus, 1 John 1:1 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." John & the others had heard, seen, & touched Jesus Christ.

C. Martha, Lazarus' sister had had the same experience.

- In the Gospels it is clear that Martha, Mary, & their brother Lazarus were very good friends w/Jesus. He had spent much time in their home, having a deep fellowship w/them. And now a tragedy had struck-- Lazarus was dead. Martha knew from the O.T. that one day Lazarus would rise again. But when Jesus told her "I am the resurrection", He took this doctrine out of the Book & transformed it into a person. He made the words of the Scriptures come alive because He is the living Word.

D. When you are sick, you want a doctor & not a medical book.

- When you are being sued you want a lawyer & not a law book. Likewise, when you face the last enemy, death, you want a Savior, not just a doctrine written in a book. In Jesus Christ every doctrine taught in the book becomes personal. When you belong to Jesus the Bible goes beyond interesting stories & commands to follow. It comes to life because you have come into a personal relationship w/the one who describes Himself as "Resurrection." When you belong to Jesus you have all that you will ever need in life, death, time, or eternity.



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- While we thank God for what the Bible teaches, we realize that we are saved by the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, & not by a doctrine written in a book. We believe every word in the Book is true, but our faith is not in a book as much as it is in the person of Christ. Jesus brings the resurrection from the book to a person.

Transition: Lastly, we need to realize that the greatest transformation Jesus performed was to move the doctrine of the resurrection:

3. FROM THE FUTURE TO THE PRESENT

A. We notice that Martha was looking to the future--knowing that one day her beloved brother Lazarus would rise again. Many Christians look forward to the future, to the day they will be fully united w/the Savior. And this is, of course, a good thing.

B. But Martha's friends were looking to the past. In v.37 we learn that they were wondering why Jesus hadn't prevented Lazarus from dying. Many of us find ourselves looking to the past.

1. Some remember better days gone by & they long to experience them again. Others look to their past & wish for some way to erase the mistakes they have made in life.

C. And although there is some benefit to examining our past, & some benefit to looking toward the future--we find that Jesus is trying to center our attention on the present. He said in v.25 (READ)- Jesus was talking about the here & now. He was saying that we don't have to wait till the end to experience resurrection--it is available to us now. Those who place their faith in Christ will never experience death but will live forever in the power of the resurrection. The N.T. is filled w/this teaching:

1. Rom 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

2. Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

3. Phil 3:10-11 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."



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D. Jesus is concerned with where we are right now.

- Are we living a life dependent on Him? Are we experiencing the excitement of resurrection power? Are we daily expressing that power in our relationships.

E. We need to look to the future & sometimes we need to examine the past--but what is most important is the present. Consider where you are right now in your relationship w/Jesus Christ: Is He real to you? Can you reach out & touch Him? Is He making a difference in your life & the lives of those around you? He can--if you'll only believe.

Conclusion:

- If you will read on in our text you will discover that Jesus indeed raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus stood before his tomb loudly commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" And in v.44 we read (READ). No doubt there was great rejoicing that day in the town of Bethany. There can also be great rejoicing in the town of Mt. Vernon today. Rejoicing because Jesus has brought the resurrection from: The Shadows into the Light. The Book to a Person. The Future to the Present.