

The Two Resurrections

John 5:19-29

The gospel of John contains large passages from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. None is more important than this passage which gives us the Lord's teaching concerning what can be called the present and future resurrections from the dead.

The Lord described his work as thoroughly consonant with the work of the Father. Christ Jesus is the only fully obedient Son of God. And, what the Father does the Son does also. It is the Father's work to raise the dead, and therefore the Son is the giver of life as well. We are completely dependent on him to grant and sustain life. He does this in the most lordly sovereign manner. He gives life to whom he will.

It is therefore essential for us to worship him, to recognize him as the author and giver of life. We honor him as we honor the Father, because he is equal with the Father. To fail to worship the Son is to fail to worship the Father. To fail to heed the teaching of the Son is to miss the very word of God. And to miss his teaching on spiritual and physical resurrection is tragic indeed.

There are two resurrections taught in the Bible. The first is the spiritual resurrection. The Lord taught us that the hour had arrived, while he was here on the earth, that the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God and that hearing they would live. They would not be objects of judgment. They would inherit life and experience nothing less than resurrection from the dead.

The language that the Lord used here sounds at first as if he was talking about physical resurrection. But he was not referring to the resurrection of the body. He was teaching about the resurrection of the soul.

The whole world lies dead in trespasses and sins. This is the sad condition of the lost. We are not merely sick in trespasses and sins; we are dead. There is no life. There is no will to serve God. We "live" but are not really alive until the Holy Spirit comes and touches us with the resurrection power of God. This is no less a miracle than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

When we lie spiritually dead we are unable to do anything to help ourselves. We cannot save ourselves from the powers of darkness, from sin and its effects; we cannot do anything other than to lie helpless before God.

What love and mercy the Lord shows to us! The Holy Spirit comes to us bringing Christ and new life. Charles Wesley put it this way, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

This is the same operation of the Spirit which the Lord told Nicodemus we must have if we are to "see" the kingdom of God. We must be "born again." We must have new life. There must be a new beginning that brings with it a renewal of the will. Where, like a dead person, we had no ability to do anything to save ourselves, now that we have been saved wholly by divine intervention, we are enabled to love the Lord and to love other people as well. We have been resurrected from the dead by the hand of God.

This should not cause us to marvel. The God who has done these things gave up his only Son to death on our behalf, and raised him from the dead on the third day. One day a final resurrection of the dead will take place. One day the trumpet call of God will sound, the voice of the archangel will be heard, and the dead will arise. Those

who are in Christ will then know the eternal joy of living in a body that is free of suffering and pain. They will know a life that is free from temptation and sin. This will take place. But it will only happen for those who have first had a spiritual resurrection from the dead. There are two resurrections, and the most important one is that work of God which calls us to new life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

by Joe Nesom