

Jesus vs. Death

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[0 : 00] Well, as we come to the Word of God this morning, I hope you're hungry. I hope you're ready to hear from what He has to say. That's what this time is about. It's about Him speaking to us through His Word.

And so if you have your Bible with you, please open it up to John chapter 10. John chapter 10, verse 14. I'll put it up on the screen there for you as well.

This is Jesus talking. He said, And one shepherd.

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. Well, as I was reading through this again this past week, past weeks really, I kept coming across this question.

[1 : 33] There's just something that makes me wonder. What does Jesus mean when He says, I lay down my life only to take it up again?

What does that mean? The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again.

It seems totally clear what Jesus means when He says, I lay down my life for my sheep. I think we all get that.

But then He adds, only to take it up again. And it's here that we're probably thinking, what are you talking about, Jesus?

Imagine the look on the Pharisees' faces as they hear Him say this. I bet you their faces went from scowls to scrunched up. Like, huh?

[2 : 34] What are you talking about? Nobody talks about life and death like this. Like, I'm going to give up my life, die, and then I'm going to take my life back to myself again.

These are strange words. And you have to know the people also who were listening thought these were strange words. In fact, in verse 19, which comes just shortly down the page here right after this, it says, the Jews who heard these words were again divided.

Many of them said, He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to Him? These words sound crazy. I'm going to lay my life down, die, and then I'm going to take it back up again.

As in, bring myself back to life again? Who talks like this? Well, Jesus, the Son of God, talks like this.

And it is strange, and it is weird at the first, but it feels a little less strange three days after Jesus' death when it comes true, when He rises from the dead.

[3 : 52] That's what Jesus is talking about here, His death for His sheep, and then His resurrection from the dead three days later. And I think we all know that Jesus is talking about His resurrection here.

I mean, what else could it mean to lay down your life and then take it back up again? But even though we know Jesus is talking about resurrection, these words still sound very strange.

At least to me they do. For starters, rising from the dead is uncommon. Not just uncommon, it's exceedingly rare.

There are not many people who we, even in the entire Bible here, were raised from the dead.

In fact, in the entire Old Testament there were only three. From creation to the time of Christ, only three people that we know of, that's recorded, were raised from the dead.

[4 : 53] There was the widow of Zarephath's son, the Shunammite woman's son, and that guy whose dead body touched Elisha's bones and he came alive when he was being buried.

Then during the ministry of Christ, Jesus raised three more people from the dead. The widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, and we're going to get to Lazarus in John chapter 11 soon. Now we're up to six. The moment Jesus died, there was also a group of people who were raised from the dead. It says in Matthew 27, verse 50, we don't know how many, but it says that they came out of their tombs and came into the city.

And then there were two people raised from the dead after Jesus ascended into heaven. There was Tabitha and Eutychus, the guy who fell asleep to Paul's preaching and fell out the window.

And then of course, there was Jesus' own resurrection from the dead. So including Jesus, that's a total of nine people plus this unknown number who were raised from the dead.

[6 : 07] Nine plus an unknown number over a period of, we'll say, six to eight thousand years. So it's exceedingly rare for someone to come back to life from the dead.

Why is it so rare? Well, for starters, only God can raise people back to life from the dead. Only the Creator has the power to give life and to undo death.

And as far as we know, throughout the time period of the Scriptures, He's only chosen to do it ten times, unless there's a few others that He didn't tell us about.

Why doesn't God do it more often? Well, that's a big question. And it's not one that we get a direct and comprehensive answer to in the Bible. But maybe it's not quite the question we should be asking.

Maybe instead we should be asking, why did God make an exception to the norm of death in these ten instances? Here's a couple passages of Scripture which may lead us to some answers.

[7 : 16] Hebrews 9.27. It says, Just as people are destined to die once, or it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that, to face judgment.

Who has appointed it to be like that? Well, it's God that's decided that. And we all know from the bigger story of the Bible the reason why.

Death comes to all of us as a part of our punishment for sin. And this verse, Hebrews 9.27, makes it clear that it's the norm for people to die.

And so why did God make an exception to this norm for these ten instances and undo their death? Well, we're not going to look in depth at each one of these resurrections, but here's a couple reasons why.

Acts 2.22. This is Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preaching to the Jewish people, to all who are gathered there. He says, fellow Israelites, listen to this, Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you.

[8 : 34] How? By miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him as you yourselves know.

There's a lot in there, but do you see God's purpose, one of his purposes, in doing miracles, signs, and wonders? It's to validate Jesus, to accredit Jesus, to prove before the eyes of all who saw that Jesus is my son.

And yes, I indeed am speaking through him. Therefore, I work through him the things that only I can do.

It's like God's signature. It's like his stamp of authenticity on Jesus. His words to you are my words to you. And this is not the only passage like this, but this is kind of a general principle.

God's purpose, one of them, in working signs and wonders and miracles, including raising some people from the dead, was to confirm and validate that the person who he did it through was his chosen prophet or apostle.

[10 : 00] Or in the case of Jesus, not just a prophet, but son, lamb, life, light, Messiah, good shepherd, and the list goes on for Jesus.

Contrary to the idea of some, God reserves miracles, signs, and wonders for special moments and situations.

He uses those things to mark his chosen servants. servants, and I don't mean all of his servants, but specifically those who speak for him, those who are his mouthpieces, the ones who, when they speak, it's really God who is speaking through them.

how can we know for sure that what they are saying is the word of God? God does what only he can do through them. Special acts of power.

This is a general principle in scripture and it's how we know that the prophets in the Old Testament were sent from God as opposed to those false prophets who couldn't do those things.

[11:10] and it's how we know that Jesus is who he said he is. It's how we know that the apostles who came after Jesus really did speak on Christ's behalf and were sent out by him.

Let's look at one example of this. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 4, he said this, he said, my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Well, what demonstration of the Spirit's power is he talking about? Paul actually tells us what that is in his second letter, 2 Corinthians 12, verse 12.

He's, in that letter, defending his apostleship. He tells the Corinthians there, I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders, and miracles. In other words, it's the signs, the wonders, the miracles that Paul did, that's how you know that I, Paul, really do speak for Christ. I really was sent out by him as an apostle, a true apostle of the Lord Jesus.

[12:28] If you look down a little further in chapter 13, verse 3 of 2 Corinthians, you can see, Paul says, on my return, I will not spare those who sinned earlier, or any of the others, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.

So this is the issue. The Corinthians are saying, we're not so sure that you are an apostle anymore, that the Lord Jesus is really speaking through you, that we need to obey your words as if we're obeying the Lord Jesus, and Paul's giving his defense.

Don't you remember when I first came to you? I did all the things that a true apostle does, including signs, miracles, wonders. So one primary reason that God works miracles, signs, and wonders is to authenticate his chosen messengers.

Let's think about who was involved in each of these ten resurrection moments in the Bible. There was the prophet Elijah, who raised a person from the dead only once.

There was the prophet Elisha, who did it once as well. Well, once while he was alive and once from his bones. Then there was Peter, the apostle, who did it once.

[13:52] And there was Paul, who did it once. Jesus, on the other hand, he raised three people from the dead and was himself raised from the dead.

And at the very moment of Jesus' death on the cross, it says that many were raised from the dead. that's God's unique, one-of-a-kind signature way of saying, pay attention to what is happening in this moment as all those people come alive in the very moment that the Son of God dies.

Or in the cases of the other resurrections, it's God's way of saying, listen to this person. This person speaks on my behalf. Now let me say briefly, authenticating the messenger and spotlighting the moment are not the only reason God does miracles, of course.

It's not the only reason he raises the dead. God can have more than one purpose for doing things. And often he does. Another reason he did, I think, is simply because he had compassion in his heart and was moved deeply to do this for these people.

You think of that small number of people that were raised from the dead. Three out of nine of the individuals named were widows. Or at least the sons were the ones who were raised.

[15:24] Sons of widows. I don't think that's a coincidence. We are told time and time again about how God has a special care and concern for the fatherless and the widow.

So he also raises from the dead out of compassion for those who lost loved ones. Probably who would be in dire straits without their help to provide.

And of course we can safely assume that God in some of those instances raised them back to life because he had a purpose for them. He had work that he planned to do through them as they continue to live.

We see that with Lazarus who became living proof and a walking testimony to Jesus. But now let's finally talk about the difference between Jesus and the rest.

This is what our sermon is all about this morning. With Elijah and Elisha and Peter and Paul those are the only four men aside from Jesus who raised someone from the dead in the Bible.

[16:24] with those four men we know that it wasn't by their own power. Just as Paul said we read my message and my preaching came to you with a demonstration not of my power but of the Spirit's power.

God's the one who did the miracles. It was his power that made it happen. That's how Eutychus was raised from the dead. Paul gives the credit to God.

But watch this. Jesus speaks a little bit differently. I'll read it again. John 10 17 and 18. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again.

No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

This command I received from my Father. Do you hear it? I'm going to lay down my life of my own accord and I'm going to take up my life again.

[17 : 38] You must be mistaken Jesus. What you really meant to say was I'm going to lay my life down and my Father's going to raise me up again or restore it to me again. no that's not what Jesus said.

He said I'm going to lay down my life of my own accord and I'm going to take my life up again. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take up my life again.

Do you hear it now? this is why some thought Jesus was crazy. Like Jesus are you saying that you are going to raise yourself from the dead?

Yes. That's what Jesus is saying. But that's impossible. How can a dead person act upon themselves? Once you're dead you're dead.

Well that's how it is for you and me. We can't do much of anything without a body. But this is where we see the unique difference between us and Jesus Christ the Son of God.

[18 : 52] Yes the body of Jesus died but that immaterial part of Jesus did not die. Jesus the Son of God did not cease to exist and Jesus raised Jesus from the dead.

I know that sounds weird and strange but I say it that way on purpose to draw you in so that you hear what Jesus is saying. He says I have authority to take up my life again.

I will lay down my life I will surrender my body to death but then I will retake my life I will take it up again not just incidentally because the Father restores it to me but actively I will take it up I'm the one that has authority to do that.

Yes Jesus is saying I will raise myself back to life from the dead I will restore what was destroyed my body back to life again maybe you're thinking Josh that's so strange I've never heard that in all my years are you sure you're not off on this well let's look back at what Jesus said in John chapter 2 verse 19 you remember that he's in the temple courts he's driving out the sellers there's a heated exchange between him and the temple officials they say give us a sign by what authority are you doing these things and what does Jesus say to them he says destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days and John the author tells us that in that moment

Jesus was not talking about the temple building but about his body that's John chapter 2 verse 19 they replied it has taken 46 years to build this temple and you're going to raise it in three days but the temple he had spoken of was his body you hear what Jesus is saying destroy this temple my body and I will raise it again in three days do you hear it I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again unlike the other four human beings that we know were involved in raising another person from the dead this resurrection is different there's something about this Jesus that is unlike any other human being

[21 : 51] Jesus himself is unbeatable even by death how can that be Jesus is not just any other human being he is the God man he is both human and divine as we sung about earlier meekness and majesty now some of you who notice details might be thinking but Josh what about those 24 passages that all say that it was God who raised Jesus from the dead three of which specify that it was the father who raised Jesus from the dead here's one of them Galatians 1 verse 1 Paul an apostle sent not from men nor by a man but by Jesus Christ and God the father God the father who raised him that's Jesus from the dead did God the father raised Jesus from the dead or did

Jesus raise himself from the dead my answer is it's not either or it's both in fact it's all three father son and holy spirit acting together in perfect harmony Romans 8 verse 11 tells us about how the spirit is involved in this too and if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of or through as some translations say his spirit who lives in you father son and holy spirit were all at work together in raising Jesus back to life from the dead it's not either or it's both and and this confirms what Jesus has been telling us all along about this special relationship that he has with his father we'll go back to John chapter five and read it one more time Jesus said very truly

I tell you the son can do nothing by himself he can do only what he sees his father doing here it is because whatever the father does the son also does they work together in everything including Jesus resurrection the father raises Jesus back to life from the dead and in that same moment in

perfect unison Jesus raises his own body back to life from the dead he reassumes his existence in that body now a body completely transformed and restored a glorious body destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days I lay down my life for my sheep only to take it up again I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again so what do we do with all this well if you're here mainly to find out more about yourself or your situation you might be a little bit disappointed with my message

I could say it more directly this message is not about you it's about Jesus it's about what he said that day and it's not that it has nothing to do with us I mean we've been celebrating I hope for the past number of weeks that Jesus laid down his life for his sheep for you and for me but Jesus wants you to know in the midst of all that that even before it happens though he will die he will die he will not stay dead when's the last time you heard anyone successfully predict their own resurrection this is why we need to take everything that Jesus says so seriously this is why we need to hold his words in the highest of regards far above all the words that are flying around in our world today sometimes the things

Jesus says sound a little weird like talking about raising himself back to life from the dead but then it happened and this should change everything about how we see Jesus here's where it hits home to us specifically over and over and over again in John's gospel we've heard Jesus say if you truly believe in me like from the heart sincerely in the heart if you truly believe in me I will give to you eternal life we could hardly even count the number John 3 15 John 3 16 John 3 36 John 4 14 John 5 24 and 25 John 5 28 John 6 27 6 34 to 35 6 47 and the list goes on there's even more all of these if you believe in me I will give you eternal life 6 verse 40 if you believe in me

[27 : 22] I will raise you up at the last day that's quite the promise to make isn't it especially given that 10 out of 10 people die and as far as we know up to this point in the story there's only ever been five people who have been raised from the dead ever and later they too died a second time how can we be sure that Jesus can deliver this promise I will give you eternal life and I will raise you up at the last day we can be sure we can be confident because Jesus exercised his own life giving authority and power on his own dead body and did what is truly miraculous he rose up from the grave and conquered death and so yes he can raise you and me to no problem and give us life that never ends or fails on the last day and so

I want to invite you come to the Lord Jesus and if you have not done this yet repent and believe in him this is his promise to you if you do and if you've already done that then I want to invite you to rejoice with me this morning our Lord Jesus conquered death I mean think about that he did what none of us can do on our own he had a showdown with death itself and after taking the worst blow that death could deal to him he got up and gave death itself the knockout punch and that's why we do more than just celebrate Jesus we worship him we give him glory we worship and give him glory just as we worship and give glory to God the father he's worthy of it let's pray

Lord Jesus we thank you that you have this great power and authority to give life and we need that even as we are reminded today that life doesn't always last as long as we think it will one day our time is coming each one of us the day that we will die and yet you offer us something supremely valuable and I pray that we would hold fast to your promise and we give you glory that one day we will live forever with you thank you we love you amen doing a and oh I love you Ivey you
I I why it it I I I I I I I I