

Christ's Affirmation of Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Let's turn this evening to the passage we read in Luke's Gospel, verses 27 to 40. The Gospel of Luke, verses 27 to 40.

This is, as we've read, where Jesus dealt with an inquiry, or an attempt in fact to catch him out, on the part of a group of people called the Sadducees.

And the question that they asked us, we've seen, was in regard to the resurrection and relationships after the resurrection has taken place.

Now questions about the afterlife, life after death, what happens to people after they die, questions as to whether there is a resurrection from the dead, what happens to our bodies after they have been buried, is there a resurrection, what then happens in the world beyond this world.

These are questions which are not recent, they're not something that are confined to our own generation, or even in recent history, they are as old, really, as human beings.

[1 : 21] And if you go back to Moses' own time, when the Egyptians were the world power of the time, it's become known, of course, that Egyptian philosophy, or Egyptian thought, gave much attention to life after death.

Which is why you find the artifacts that were buried with the pharaohs, for example, in the sepulcher within the pyramids. The articles there were for the afterlife.

They were supposed to help those who had passed on from this world, to help them in the world beyond this world, or the world after death. That's what was involved in this question that these Sadducees put to Jesus.

They set this scenario for him, of this woman who had had these seven husbands, we'll see in a minute the Levite law that required this kind of thing to take place.

But then the question they put to Jesus was, while seeing she was the wife of these seven brothers consecutively, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

[2 : 40] That was how they were trying to catch Jesus out. Waiting to see what sort of answer he would give. And the answer he gave, of course, as we've seen going through Luke's Gospel, was the answer, not necessarily that they were looking for, and certainly not in this instance, but an answer that really gave them what he knew they needed to be told.

That's always the way with Christ. We've seen again and again that he doesn't answer people exactly in accordance with what they understand or they would prefer, but he gives them the truth, as he himself decides at that moment how they should be told what that truth is.

So let's look at his handling of the Sadducees, first of all, and then we'll look secondly at the significance of resurrection. Just finishing off our study tonight with the significance of resurrection in salvation or in our experience as believing people, and in the future, especially of God's people, as the Bible teaches us about resurrection and the place that it has in God's scheme of salvation for his people.

He, first of all, dealt with the Sadducees. Now, who were the Sadducees? Well, there were a group of people amongst the religious leaders of the time that Christ lived on earth.

Along with the Pharisees and the scribes, they were actually leaders within the religious community. They had their own place in the leadership, and they had certain ideas and certain beliefs which differed from those of the Pharisees.

[4 : 29] In fact, they were rivals to the Pharisees who were very much of a self-righteous nature, as we've seen also in Luke's Gospel, but the Sadducees were a bit more aristocratic.

They were a kind of a posh version of leadership. But some of the things that they believed have been recorded for us in history. There isn't much at all about them and what they believed in the scriptures or elsewhere.

But what there is recorded, we rely upon old historians like Josephus who wrote a history of the Jews, of the Jewish people, and the things that he tells us about these Sadducees were that they were rivals to the Pharisees, but they denied certain things that the Pharisees actually believed, such as the resurrection.

The Sadducees do not seem to have believed even in an afterlife. They really didn't seem to take account of anything beyond death as being of any significance or any importance.

They were really, in many ways, rejecting what you and I would call the supernatural, the world of angels and of spirits that we know exist in the invisible world of spirits.

[5 : 45] Angels, devils, the devil himself. All of these principalities and powers, as Paul calls them, they were not believed in by the Sadducees.

And that's why going through the Gospel of Luke is really, in many ways, for ourselves. It brings us messages that are so relevant, not just for ourselves, but for the conditions of our day.

Because you could say, really, that the Sadducees were a kind of moralistic people. They didn't really believe in such things as the resurrection, and probably not even in the afterlife or life after death at all.

But they wanted to live a good life. And they thought that living a good, moral, upright life, as they themselves would define that, that that was the really crucial and important thing.

In other words, they were pretty much like people of our own day, who reject the idea of God, but still want to have a morality as such that you can define in different ways as human thinking develops.

[6 : 56] And people who reject the idea of the supernatural, of the existence of devils, the existence of angels, even the existence of God, but would still want to say, well, there's something in the teachings of Jesus.

He was a great moral teacher, and we're quite happy to take the moral teachings that Jesus left us, even though, in the idea of so many of these people, they came to be distorted by people like Paul and Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the Apostle, and really took these teachings of Jesus, and developed them beyond what Jesus himself had in his teaching.

That's the kind of thing you come across so frequently today, from people who don't really believe in the existence of God, but want to take, as they see it, something of the best strands of teaching, from the moral teaching of Christ.

Well, of course, we know from the Bible, we know from our view of the Bible, we know from our relationship with God, we know that you cannot have a moral, upright life without a proper basis for it.

And the basis for it is the truth of God. And you cannot really expect just to pick and choose from the Bible things which will help you to live a decent moral life if you ignore the commands of God and the law of God and the claim of Christ upon our lives and the need to bow to Christ in lordship and the fact that he is risen from the dead and reigns in heaven and is coming again at the last day as the judge of all the earth.

[8 : 32] That's the kind of thing that the Sadducees rejected. And they came to him with this question. Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

Now that was something that you actually see in the Bible worked out in the life of someone like Ruth. If you look at the book of Ruth, Ruth was a Moabitess but she came back to the land of Naomi.

She came back to Naomi's people, to the Jewish people. And because her husband had died and left her childless, she didn't have children of her own, the practice was the law, the Levirate law was that the nearest relative, the brother if possible, would marry the widow and therefore have children hopefully and therefore carry on the family name.

And remember also in those days that land was very important to families. Their lives were lived in relation to the land. So if you wanted to retain the land, you had to maintain the family name and the family had to be kept going all the way down through the generations.

And this was one of the provisions that God had made, that this was allowable that if a man died, if a woman died, sorry, if a man died and the widow was left without children, then his brother or a near relative would actually marry her.

[10 : 07] That came to be known as the kinsman-redeemer. He was really effectively redeeming that woman in all likelihood from poverty as Boaz did with Ruth.

But what the Sadducees were saying is this actually happened to this woman seven times. Now of course, this was probably just a scenario that they were painting for the Lord.

It's unlikely that this was an actual instance of a real person, although it's possible that it was. But in any case, what they said was all the way through the seven men since her first husband died, the seven left her with no children.

Even after these seven brothers had married her. So in the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as a wife. Now you see, the strategy of the Sadducees is very interesting.

What they're really doing is giving a scenario or a situation to Jesus that's really a bit absurd. They know that there's an absurdity about this.

[11 : 17] That there's something about this that just doesn't ring through. And therefore, what they're really concluding from that is, well, because this is such an absurd scenario that all of these men had this woman as wife but left no children, then it's even greater, an even greater absurdity to think of such a thing as a resurrection that somehow or other in the afterlife.

She's going to be faced with a dilemma, whose wife am I going to be of these seven men? Because I had them all as a husband in life before I died.

So if there's such a thing as resurrection, she's going to be faced with that dilemma. Isn't that just absurd? Isn't that just stupid? That's their argument. That's how they're hoping to catch Jesus out.

Which one of these seven men is Jesus going to say will be her real husband in the age of the resurrection? And they're hoping, of course, that he will say, well, yes, you've caught me out.

Actually, there is no such thing as the resurrection. Otherwise, this would be ridiculous. But, of course, let's look at Christ's response. And, far from catching him out, he actually silenced them.

[12 : 36] What did he say? Well, he said, first of all, something that corrected their thinking. So there's two sides to his reply. He corrected their thinking, and then he affirmed or asserted very firmly the fact, the reality of resurrection.

He corrects, and then he affirms that resurrection is a fact. It is real. It's something that stands true.

First of all, he corrects them. Because what he says is, the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. That's this world as we know it.

But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age, that's the age of the resurrection, the age of the world to come after the resurrection, and to the resurrection from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

for they cannot die anymore because they are equal or like the angels and are sons of God being sons or children of the resurrection. Now what Jesus is saying there is that after the resurrection, on the other side of the resurrection, the conditions that people actually have in terms of relationships are entirely different to those that exist in this world.

[14 : 00] There is no such a thing, there is no such thing on the other side of the resurrection as marriage, as husbands, wives, children, families.

Why not? Because for God's people there is one father then that they relate to that's God the father. And they are all children of that one father.

And they are related together as the children of that father. And there is no such thing in that world of the resurrection as marriage to certain individuals. They are all married spiritually to God.

And everything that has to do with marriage and with family life in this world is gone. It's not relevant to the age of the resurrection. It's a whole new set of conditions in a whole new state of being which you cannot fully grasp in this world.

They are, he says, like the angels. And isn't it interesting and isn't it a powerful point to people who don't believe in angels that here is Jesus correcting their thinking and saying to them these people of the resurrection the sons of God in the resurrection they are like the angels.

[15 : 14] Angels don't get married. Angels don't have families. They relate to God only. And he is saying that's how it will be in the resurrection.

We will be like the angels in that respect. That we will relate to God and to God only and we are all his children those who are saved are his children and the relationships of this world are no longer relevant.

They come to an end when we die or when our loved ones die if they're taken from us before we are. Before we die.

Now that doesn't mean that in the world to come God's people will not know one another. Jesus is not suggesting that in the world of the resurrection the relationships that we have in this world although they're at an end it doesn't mean that we don't have the memory of who our loved ones were who husbands were that we will not know each other that we will just relate to each other as unknown individuals with a common fatherhood in God.

He's not at all giving us any evidence for that. And we understand from elsewhere in the scriptures that we will recognize each other in the resurrection in heaven.

[16 : 40] But it will not be so as to have the relationships to each other in marriage and in family life that we've had in this world. Now if we go to Mark's gospel and to Matthew's gospel and look at the same passage because of course you'll get when you do that you get some other parts of what Jesus said sometimes that some of like Luke have missed out or perhaps the other way about but sometimes we need to put it all together so that you get the complete picture.

And in Matthew and in Mark there's something there that Luke hasn't actually recorded for us although it's behind the scenes as it were and it's this that Jesus said to the Sadducees you are actually in error and then he told them two things about that you are in error because he said to them you do not know the scriptures or the power of God.

That was what he really said to them in regard to their questions. That's how he corrected their thinking he actually brought them to the root of their problem and the root of their problem was twofold they didn't know the scriptures nor did they know the power of God.

You see the Sadducees only believed the five books of Moses to be scripture. they rejected the rest of the Old Testament as not equivalent to scripture to the word of God they only accepted as such the five books of Moses usually called the Torah.

And that's why it's so important that Jesus actually came to quote something from the five books of Moses and actually said to the Pharisees you are actually in error because you don't know the scriptures.

[18 : 40] and that's so important for ourselves as well. We know the scriptures outwardly we may know the scriptures very well outwardly we may be able to quote where such and such a thing is found in scripture we may be able to tell people what the third chapter of Genesis or Exodus or whatever book of the Bible says we may know where the great priestly prayer of Jesus is in John 17 we may know the contents of 2 Corinthians 5 dealing with the reconciliation that God has brought about through the death of Christ we may be able to quote from the Psalms almost verbatim but the Sadducees although they could do a lot of that they didn't know the scripture in a way that really had accepted it as having implications for their lifestyle you can know the word outwardly and verbally that doesn't mean you know it here inwardly it doesn't mean your soul is moved by it it doesn't mean that you make it your rule of faith and life and manner and lifestyle that's what's crucial for ourselves along with that the Sadducees have no experience of God in their souls they look to the five books of

Moses that was all they had no experience of the power of God or a proper knowledge of the scripture personally so tonight don't rely on the fact that you know your Bible well it's a good thing that you know your Bible well we're not denouncing that of course and sadly the fact is that all around us many people don't know their Bible well and some don't even know their Bible at all and couldn't even tell you what the first five books of the Bible are or who wrote them we're not denouncing knowing the Bible well it's something that we in fact commend commend assuredly but there's a man in John's gospel who knew the Bible well he wasn't a Sadducee but he was a ruler of the synagogue a man who taught others things from the word of God he came to Jesus by night and he said Rabbi we know that you are a teacher who has come from God for no one can do these things that you are doing except

God send him and Jesus turned to him and with a devastating reply he said except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God Nicodemus this man was well assured that he was already within the kingdom of God he knew his scripture so well he taught others the scripture he was a ruler of the synagogue he didn't know the scripture powerfully he didn't know God personally he didn't have the power of God working in his heart and Jesus immediately confronted him with that greatest need of all that he had the need to be born again don't leave it at the fact that you know the Bible well yes it's important but the most important thing is to be born again to have your heart changed to have your life taken over by

Christ to be under his lordship to know the work of his spirit in your heart to have your sins forgiven to be justified to be right with God to have peace with God to have a positive hope of eternal life to look forward to the coming of Christ and to the resurrection that immediately comes and precedes the coming of Christ or happens at the time that Christ comes that's what's really important that's what's crucial that's what brings us into the possession of this eternal life because without it doesn't matter how well we know we know our Bible in fact the better we know our Bible the more the privilege we've had in understanding the scripture even as they're preached to us the greater our condemnation will be if we don't know the power of God and a transformed life by the power of Christ you are in error he said to them not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God but then he turned from having corrected them and bringing them to the root of their problem for their correction he then came to affirm this resurrection but he said that the dead are raised even Moses showed in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of

Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob now again if you go to Matthew's gospel Mark's gospel Mark chapter 12 and verse 26 not only did Jesus tell them you are in error not knowing the scripture for the power of God he actually put the question according to Mark this way have you never read in the books of Moses he was challenging them to the five books of the scriptures that they accepted that they themselves prided themselves in that they were confining themselves and their knowledge to the five books of Moses and Jesus has said to them you don't know the books of Moses if you knew the books of Moses properly you would actually have realized by now that Moses spoke about resurrection that Moses actually addressed God as the God of the resurrection as the God of the living not of the dead have you never read he said to them that the dead are raised even Moses showed in the passage about the bush now we read that passage a few moments ago and you remember that when God addressed Moses out of that amazing sight that he saw this bush in the desert that was burning and on fire and yet the wood of the bush was not being consumed like a fire normally does and that's really initially what drew

[25 : 18] Moses to this sight he said I must turn aside and see this great sight why this bush is not burned up why this is on fire and yet the wood is not being burnt up and then of course God spoke to him out of the midst of the bush that was the bush itself and the fire was itself an emblem or a representation of the presence of God and Moses was instructed to take off his sandals the place that he was standing on was holy ground God was there and Moses immediate reaction was to cover his face because he was afraid to look upon God when God had spoken to him out of this burning bush Moses immediately realized God is here God is actually in this bush it's God is speaking to me out of this remarkable phenomenon and I cannot look upon

God or I will be dead and God then said to him I am the God of your father the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and then he instructed him to go back to his people to the Jewish people in Egypt to Israel and say to them that he had met with the God of their fathers and he was to tell them I am has sent me to you then he repeated what God had said to him the God of Abraham the God of Isaac the God of Jacob he has appeared to me and sent me to you why is all that relevant well Jesus said that's how Moses spoke about God having heard God speak about himself like that now he says he is not the God of the dead but of the living for all live unto him in other words Jesus will say to the Pharisees Moses isn't dead neither is Abraham nor is

Isaac or Jacob they are alive they are with God he is the God of the living not of the dead he is not the God of the dust of these men who were buried which was buried in the ground he is the God of these people and where are they in their persons in their own living consciousness they are actually with God he is the God not of the dead but of the living and the logical follow on from that is that since that is the case now the process is going to be completed in such a thing as the resurrection you can't actually in taking the whole thing with you you can't actually leave it at just the fact that they live now in the presence of God they are awaiting the resurrection of their bodies when Christ comes and when he brings their bodies to be raised from the dead and you see that was one of the great arguments in Paul's first letter to the

Thessalonians we dipped into the second letter this morning briefly but when he was writing the first letter to the Thessalonians he was then addressing something of an anxiety that they had there were some of them who had died since they had become Christians and followers of Christ and those who were left were saying well Jesus hasn't yet come back he hasn't returned like the apostle taught us so what's happened to our companions and what's going to happen to them when Jesus does return if he's going to return where will they then be are they going to miss out on the return of Christ if he comes while we're still alive what about these fellow Christians of ours who have passed on who are no longer in this world well of course Jesus God actually Paul rather dealt with that question where he said since we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so through

Jesus God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep for this we declare to you by a word from the Lord that we who are alive and who are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of an archangel with the trumpet sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air so we will always be with the Lord there is the completing stage of our redemption there is what we are waiting for at the return of Christ that our resurrection bodies will be brought again to be united with our souls and that will be us complete in our salvation to be with Christ forever he is not the God of the dead but of the living for all live unto him in other words all of us as human beings as Paul put it elsewhere in him we live and move and have our being

[30 : 51] God lifts his little finger at the time when our course in this world will end and that will be it we will end our course we can't go beyond that it is God who decides it is God who has the right to decide we all live unto him we live in dependency upon him when he withdraws the means by which he keeps us alive then we shall die our body if it is before Christ returns we die then our body goes to the dust to await the resurrection resurrection of the body whenever we bury people certainly my practice I always mention as we commit the remains to the dust whether it is a Christian or a non-Christian we are all going to be resurrected some to damnation some to everlasting life but the fact is we commit these remains dust to dust ashes to ashes to await the great day of the resurrection when we must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ how often do you think about that I mean really think about it there are many people that go to funerals and to graveyards they are not talking about the resurrection when they leave the graveyard they are not even thinking perhaps about the resurrection when they are looking at an open grave and listening to the minister as he commits these remains to the dust how often do you think about it how often do you contemplate it how often do you study it how often do you say to yourself that is going to be me in a very short time but where will I be where will I be consciously while my body is in the tomb in the grave well he is saying God is the God not of the dead but of the living for all live unto him he is the God of eternal life he is the God that has given us in Jesus

Christ eternal life that is the second thing the significance of resurrection in salvation let's just finish by briefly just thinking about that here is Jesus demonstrating a resurrection there is such a thing the fact of the resurrection is made clear to him in this remarkable way that he speaks about a God being the God of the living but what is the significance of resurrection well in 1st Corinthians 15 you have the most sustained passage on resurrection in the Bible and what it says again the argument that Paul follows there is really quite remarkable and very very powerful because he is addressing some people who don't believe there is such a thing as the resurrection just like there are so many today well he is saying if there is no such thing as resurrection then Christ could not have risen from the dead Jesus Christ must still be dead that is what he is saying if you say there is no resurrection there can't be a resurrection as far as

Jesus Christ is concerned he died and was buried his body was laid in the sepulchre and if there is no resurrection it is still there Jesus is dead and Paul says if that is the case then that has huge implications because if Christ is dead our faith is futile our preaching is in vain our hope isn't really hope at all if there is no resurrection Christ has not been raised and if Christ has not been raised we are still in our sins and we are of all people the most miserable if we think only of this life as relevant as far as having life eternal is concerned or if as he puts it there if we have hope in Christ for this life only we are of all people most to be pitied but he says Christ is raised he is stating it as a known fact to himself how did

Paul know that Christ was risen from the dead he met him he spoke to him he was addressed by him he met him on the way to Damascus as he was planning on further havoc against the church of Christ and the Christ against whom he was fighting the Christ that he despised the Christ that he didn't believe had risen from the dead the Christ that he was actually at that very moment concerned really to wipe out the memory of him from the face of the earth he met him and when he met him it wasn't like Christ as he was before he died it was Christ in such brilliance of light in the splendor of his glory in his resurrection exalted glory as he came to meet the apostle on the way to Damascus that Jesus having met him there his reaction was instantly to fall to the ground like someone dead is that the kind of Christ that you have in your own experience is that your view of Christ tonight is that your view of this risen savior that not only is a risen from the dead but he is risen to such stature and to such greatness and to such splendor that to meet him and to see him as he is knocks you senseless to the ground if you were to do that in the way in which

[37 : 09] Paul did we don't worship a small tiny figure we don't worship someone who was just a mere prophet who has thousands of followers but whose dust is somewhere mixed with the dust of the earth and who himself is awaiting the power of Christ to raise him from the dead we don't worship that kind of small figure we worship the gigantic colossus that Christ is whose personhood and whose glory and whose splendor and whose resurrection might covers the face of the universe that's who we worship that's who we're addressing tonight that's who Paul was concerned to present to people after he had met him for himself that's the Jesus this world needs to know that's the Jesus you and I need to know that's the Jesus who spoke these words to the Sadducees God is the God of the living and he's the God of Jesus

Christ the father of our Lord Jesus Christ just as he is the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob that's why our Christian hope is not a small thing it's not an insignificant uncertain thing what is the Christian hope it's the hope of eternal life what is it founded upon it's founded upon Christ which Christ this Christ the risen Christ the great Christ that's that's why it's called a hope that will not be put to shame hope that will be fully realized and brought to fruition and brought to the very thing that it yearns towards to be with Christ in your resurrection glory that really is how we have to present not only Christ but the resurrection to the world of our day that's how we have to present our hope of eternal life that is not a hope without it involving resurrection because you made all kinds of ideas some from far eastern philosophy some from just imaginings of people's minds some from crazy way out ideas things like transmigration things that are very ancient such as reincarnation the laws of karma where you go from one form of life to the next and then to the next again and who knows how you will appear next it might be a bird it might be an animal who knows what it might be it's just built into the laws of karma it all depends how well you live your life in this world nonsense what Jesus is saying is

I am the I am the resurrection and the life when you come to know me you come to believe in resurrection and you come to believe in resurrection as a fundamental facet and part of your redemption your body is not going to be left behind it's going to be raised incorruptible a glorious body a body like the Lord's own glorified body that's why Jesus why Paul said about knowing Jesus in Philippians 3 that this was really how he lived this was why he considered all things that previously were important to him as a basis for his relationship with God he's like comfort rubbish he says that I might have Christ that I might win Christ that I might be found in

Christ that I might know him and the power of his resurrection then he went on to say that I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead what are you hoping for what is your hope set upon well not just that when you die in your soul in your conscious soul you will go to be with God in heaven that will be the case if you're a Christian if you know the Lord if he's yours but Paul was not satisfied to leave it with that in fact he went beyond that in most cases when he speaks about the afterlife it's not about the intermediate state the state of your soul after death that's not what he's concerned for it's much more to do with the resurrection and what follows the resurrection and him attaining to the resurrection that is to say by the power of

Christ working in him that that will be the outcome and the terminus and the final state of things for him well the issue for the Sadducees was what about this woman who after seven husbands had no children the Lord's reply is effectively saying to ourselves that's not the important thing at all the important thing is to know that we are children of God and that as children of God we are therefore children of the resurrection of God's people and that as children of the resurrection we are destined for all such glorious things that human beings could never possibly appreciate or invent for themselves what is your hope who is your hope what do you think of when you think of resurrection where do you see yourself don't be as sad you see as a

[43 : 31] Christian believe in the resurrection believe in the Lord of the resurrection commit yourself to that life that is crowned in resurrection let's pray Lord our God we give thanks for all the glorious things that you have built into the redemption of your people Lord help us we pray to appreciate them ourselves to avail ourselves of them but also to commend them to the world in which we live to those people who surround us who live without hope and who are to be raised if they die without you to eternal condemnation we pray all of these things for Jesus sake Amen do how we do