

# Jesus the Teacher - Death and Resurrection

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[ 0 : 00 ] But first of all, the scripture reading from Matthew chapter 22 and verse 23. That same day, the Sadducees who say there is no resurrection came to him with a question.

Teacher, they said, Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us.

The first one was married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh.

Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, yes, not surprised. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?

Jesus replied, you are in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

[ 1 : 05 ] They will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead, you have not read what God said to you. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. Okay, next slide, please, Josh.

This is President William McKinley. He was the third U.S. president to be assassinated. There have been four. The final one was John F. Kennedy. William McKinley was a very godly Christian man. He was a Methodist in background. He was elected in the late 19th century, 1895, to be president of the United States, and he was in power until 1901, when he was shot dead by a Polish immigrant called Leon Sholsky.

He was shot dead because he was believed to be an enemy of the people. The president was believed to be an enemy of the people. Now, when he was shot, he was in New York.

[ 2 : 16 ] When he was shot, he didn't die immediately. He died after eight days because two bullets went into him. One went through him. The other they couldn't get, they couldn't find. It was in his spinal area, and it ended up leading to blood poisoning.

And that was how he died. Before he died, when the assailant was apprehended, people from the crowd began to beat him. And it was highly likely that they would have beat him to death, except the president intervened to say, don't let them hurt him.

And then in hospital, McKinley said, it must have been some poor, misguided fellow. He didn't know, poor fellow, what he was doing. He couldn't have known. It demonstrates the love and forgiveness in McKinley's heart.

McKinley's wife had long suffered. She was a chronic invalid. She had epilepsy. She had phobitis. And she had lost two children in infancy.

And after losing those two children, she had really suffered and had been nursed largely by McKinley and his family. He was obviously worried about her when he was shot.

[ 3 : 29 ] And he said, my wife, be careful how you tell her. Oh, be careful. She was at his hospital bed throughout those eight days. And when it became obvious that he was dying, he turned to her and said, goodbye, goodbye all.

It's God's way. His will, not ours, be done. Nearer, my God, to thee. Nearer to thee. And at that, his wife Ida cried out, I want to go too.

To which McKinley replied, weakly but with gentle tenderness, we are all going. We are all going. And that's the first message you need to get today. No matter how young and how fit you are, no matter how wealthy and how, you know, privileged you are, death is a reality for us all.

We are all going. The question is, will we be ready to go? Because he was ready, wasn't he? Nearer, my God, to thee.

[ 4 : 40 ] Nearer to thee. And whenever you think of that, next slide, please, you might remember the Titanic. Because the Titanic, which was supposedly unsinkable, which Captain Smith apparently said, even God could not sink this ship, sank.

On April the 15th, 1912. And 1,500 plus passengers of the 2,142 passengers on board drowned at sea.

Two hours, 20 minutes it took for that unsinkable ship to sink. Two hours and 20 minutes. You see, you can't mock God.

I'm not sure it was Edward Smith's intention to mock God. In fact, there's some dispute as to whether he even said that. Or who said it? Somebody said it, but who? But you can't mock God. We are not, as Henley claimed, the captain of our ship, the masters of our soul.

We're not. The masters of our fate, rather. The captain of our soul. We're not. Our life is not in our control. We might think it is. But a blood clot could take us in a moment.

[ 5 : 57 ] We simply don't know. None of us know when our end is. Now, I'm not saying this to be morbid. I'm just saying this because it's a fact. We can't live hoping that death will never find us.

It always, in the end, finds us. We will one day walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And the question will be, do we fear any evil?

Or do we say, no, God is with me. I will not be afraid. There's a world of difference between those two attitudes.

And when the Titanic was going down, what did they play? What did the band play? Nearer, my God, to thee. Nearer to thee. That was a reality, wasn't it?

For 1,500 souls. Anne-Marie Nelson, who is the director of the Marie Curie Palliative Care Research Association, says, We live in a death-denying society, and that needs to change.

[ 7 : 05 ] Next slide, Josh, I think. We've not got there yet, but never mind. I didn't have that quote. We live in a death-denying society, and that needs to change. Now, she deals with it, and they deal with it every day, with people with cancer.

But Jesus is aware of that. And Jesus has a lot to say about it. And whether there is any hope beyond the grave.

Of course, history has not always run away from death because it was such a reality. We're aware of the ancient Egyptians and their tombs to death with the pyramids. And the idea that, well, the wealthy and the rich need to bury all their stuff with them because they may need it after death in some other world.

Unfortunately, they should bury their wives with them, too, whether they were alive or dead. The American Indians would bury their horses, too, whether they were alive or dead, because the person who was important enough to be buried with their stuff needed to take their stuff with them, regardless of the suffering it caused to others.

The ancient Greeks used to, for wealthy people, they used to put a coin in the mouth of a corpse to pay his fare across the mystic river of death into the land of immortal life.

[ 8 : 26 ] All of them thought, didn't they, whether they were kind of putting chariots there and gold in or just that single coin, all of them thought that you needed somebody to help you out on the other side, somebody who would give you a bit of an advantage, somebody who would get you through.

It still feels like the wealthy and the powerful had the best chance. What Jesus taught about life after death, there was a world away from that kind of thing.

This idea that we enter into a realm of uncertainty where if you're wealthy or you're powerful, you might well survive it, but pity the rest of us. Jesus offers us something very, very different in the gospel, and that's what we want to see.

And in this discussion with the Sadducees, he talks about death. Why? Because death makes you Sadducee. Like that, that's a joke. It wasn't a very good one, I realize.

But never mind. Death makes you Sadducee. Because the Sadducees were a group of Jewish, largely Jewish priests, very powerful people, sometimes aristocrats in their society, who held the reins of power in Jewish life.

[ 9 : 44 ] They were connected to the temple, and they were the politicians who the Romans dealt with. And the Sadducees had a belief that held that the soul perishes along with the body at death.

Josephus tells us that, the ancient Jewish historian. The Sadducees are mentioned throughout Matthew's gospel six times, only once in Mark and Luke. And they emerged during the time when Israel was occupied by the Syrians, by Antiochus Epiphanes, in the intertestamental period

between the Old and New Testament, about 175 BC.

They derived their name from Zadok the priest. Now, Zadok the priest, you may not have heard of. He's an Old Testament character, one of the descendants of Aaron. And he was instrumental in anointing Solomon as king.

But you will have at least watched the coronation and heard Handel's Messiah, and the piece called Zadok the priest that was used for the anointing of King Charles. God save the king comes directly from the Old Testament.

Zadok the priest is a kind of almost like a, he's a real figure, a historical figure, but he also has this miracle status, the archetypal priest. When you think priest, you think him.

[11:08] And he was one of the leaders, or he was the inspiration for these Sadducees, and so everything about pomp and splendor and glory and privilege is part of their worldview.

Now, the other people we've met a lot of in Matthew's Gospel are the Pharisees, and they were the Sadducees, kind of ruled in the Sanhedrin, the Council of the Seventy. And they were given this power to rule and to exercise civil and religious authority over the nation of Israel by the Romans. They were allowed to do that, but they were not allowed to carry out the death penalty. That was reserved for the Romans. And that's why the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in the end, had to kind of become friends, though they had been mortal enemies, to get rid of Jesus, because they did not have the power to kill anybody.

To get that power, they had to get the Romans on side, and that's what part of this last week and that trial with Pilate is all about. But the Pharisees and the Sadducees, they didn't see eye to eye. The Pharisees believed that when you died, your body would be raised again. The Pharisees believed in angels. The Pharisees believed in an eternal world beyond the grave.

[12:27] The Sadducees tended not to. And the other difference was, the Pharisees observed or held all of the Old Testament to be authoritative, including the rabbinic writings.

The Sadducees really only held the first five books of Moses as being authoritative. So the prophets and the writings, like the Psalms, they kind of, you know, they knew they were important, but they weren't on a level with the five books of Moses.

And so that was their dispute. And the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body because they said they couldn't find it in the Pentateuch. Even though it was to be found in the prophets, because it was not in the Pentateuch, it was not to be regarded as a cardinal truth to teach.

So that was their point of dispute with Jesus. They perceived that Jesus believed that after death, people would rise to life. And they wanted to discuss that with him.

But it wasn't an honest discussion. They were a bit like the Pharisees. They were trying to trap Jesus in his words. And so they come to him with this rather preposterous story. You know, to take it kind of like it really happened, because she would die if he exhausted the poor woman, wouldn't she?

[13:46] But never mind. It was possible under a Jewish system, and by the way, this is where it gets a bit gritty. So sorry, but I kind of give you the background here.

This kind of feels like it should be a nine o'clock watershed moment, but I'll kind of try to be as tame as I can. There was a permission in law to operate what was called a leveret system.

And the leveret system was the idea that if somebody got married, and then they didn't have a child to the wife, and then the husband died, the family name could be lost.

And it was important to keep the family name going. So in order to keep the family name going, then the next brother would marry the widow, the brother's wife, the widow.

Okay, so that's what would happen. And then he would have a child to that woman, and the firstborn child would become his brothers, his deceased brothers, so that the name would continue.

[14:54] This was the system. It was discussed in the book of Deuteronomy, and it was permissible to do that. It was actually more than permissible, but it was a requirement to do that. There is an example of it happening in Genesis with Judah.

So Judah had a son. Judah's son got married. He died. And then his next son, his kind of baby son, who was quite a lot younger, was promised to the widow.

But she had to wait many, many years to marry him. When the boy grew up and became a man, Judah forgot his responsibility.

And so the widow decided she would dress up like a prostitute and sit on a roadside when she knew Judah was coming along and kind of entice him.

There's lots of stuff about this story which isn't very admirable. Judah comes along, sees this woman, is attracted to her, and has sex with her. Sorry, it's before nine o'clock.

[16:02] And then she says to him, she says, I want something from you. He said, what shall I give you? And so she says, give me your kind of belt and give me your insignia and so on.

And so he'd give her some personal items. And then he went away, thinking nothing more of it, because he was traveling. Fair game, nobody would know. But then word came that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, but she had no husband.

So he said, bring her out. She's got to die. And when she was brought out, she said, oh, by the way, the man who did this, these are his things.

Judah was caught. Exactly. And Judah, to his credit, says, she's more righteous than I am.

It was a kind of fairly dramatic way to kind of get your comeuppance, but he got his comeuppance. Because he had a responsibility to follow the liver system, but he didn't follow it.

[17:06] There's another story in the Old Testament of a brother called Onan, who was meant to produce a child for his deceased brother, but didn't.

He had sex with the widow, but he didn't produce the child. That's a really gritty story. And because of that, God cursed him. So we know the system was carried out.

It was possible. We don't know how often it happened. There's not a lot of references to it, but these are the references. So the Sadducees come to Jesus with this hypothetical story. They say, okay, this happened seven times.

When she dies and enters into the resurrection life, if there is such a life, well, whose wife is she going to be? Good question.

To which Jesus says, you're in error. You don't really get it, do you? They didn't really get it.

[18:06] Because, really, the question itself wasn't an honest question. They didn't believe in life after death. They didn't believe in the resurrection. So it wasn't an honest question.

It was a question that was designed to trap Jesus. But also, they didn't get the power of God.

Because if God is able to create a world in six days, he could create it in six seconds if he chose to. He could kind of solve the problem of whose wife she should be. and, of course, it's an assumption that the lifestyle in the new heavens and new earth is exactly the same as the lifestyle that we have here on earth.

So they didn't get it because they neither knew the scriptures nor the power of God. They did not know the scriptures nor the power of God.

Next slide, please, Josh. The problem that people have when it comes to Christianity and belief in death and life after death is the same problem that the Sadducees had.

[19:17] They neither know the scriptures nor the power of God. People make all kinds of claims about what Christianity teaches and they become experts in it. The first question I always ask them is when they say things like, well, of course, the Bible contradicts itself, I say, what part of the Bible do you have in mind?

That usually finds them out because they don't actually know what part of the Bible they're talking about. Too often, people make claims about what Christianity teaches. They clearly have evidently never read the Bible.

And what they certainly have never experienced is the power of God because what we as Christians understand is you can have all of the skepticism you like in the world.

You can question all kinds of things and these questions can occupy your mind and entertain you for weeks and years on end but they will never ever do you any good unless you experience the power of God converting your soul.

Once God opens your eyes to the truth then you will understand. As we were reminded on the Alpha Day and as Anselm many, many years ago said, we do not understand to believe, we believe to understand.

[20:35] The Apostle John wrote a whole gospel and he said, these are written that you might believe. What? that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing you might have life in his name.

This is my whole purpose in writing. This is why you've got the Gospel of John. This is why you have the Scriptures. Not to educate you, not to give you kind of a view of ancient history but that you might discover and know Almighty God through his Son Jesus Christ.

People who neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God need to discover those things. This is why we put the Bible into people's hands and this is why we encourage you to listen to Christian testimonies of how people's lives are changed by the power of God and to see with your eyes what God can do.

Anybody can be a skeptic. Anybody can question. But can you trust? Can you believe? When I was converted years ago I had all kinds of questions and I said well when I was asked did I want to become a Christian I said well I'm not sure I don't believe this I don't believe that I don't believe this and so on I don't believe in miracles and the minister very wisely said to me will you just trust you just pray and ask Jesus into your heart and he'll answer your questions.

And he did. The funny thing is I didn't care about the questions after that I just cared about the answers. That's a difference you see. Once you experience the power of God of course there will still be questions but you start from a place of trust.

[ 22 : 18 ] I may not know all of the answers I don't need to know all of the answers how could I possibly know all of the answers but I know somebody who does and I trust him that it will be well.

Death makes you sad you see but God gives us hope you see. I thought that was quite good. I had to work on that one. God gives us hope and hope is vital to life and purpose isn't it?

They say says Tom Baudet they say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in the world. Guess what they are? Netflix Sky TV and Newcastle get into the Champions League.

No that's not what he says. They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in the world. Someone to love something to do and someone to hope for something to hope for.

Someone to love something to do and something to hope for. I think that's right. I would just add you need to love Jesus. but nonetheless we need to love.

[ 23 : 30 ] Awful to have everything you could have in life and not to love. Awful to have all the stuff the world could offer and not have anything to do with it.

And awful to have all of that knowing that you will lay it down at death and give it to somebody else and you work for it all your life and you've got nothing left to hope for.

We all need hope. As I said there's death. What do we do with that? Here's our hope. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.

Those of us who got to a certain age we're so grateful for that psalm aren't we? Whenever there's nothing else to say when you're at the deathbed of people as I have been so many times privileged so many times in my life to be it really is a privilege to be able to quote that psalm and to know that it's got meaning for the person who has died.

It's just an unimaginable comfort to have such hope. This is not the end. This person is with God now and that is far better.

[ 24 : 44 ] And Tim Keller I mentioned him he said biblical hope is life changing certainty about the future being certain about the future in a way that affects how you live now.

And I said I put that down in my sermon before I discovered he died and then when I discovered he died he said to his people at his deathbed there's no there's nothing disadvantageous in this at all. How can you live with pancreatic cancer for four years or more and then face your last and say there's no downside to this unless you know the truth the reality of God is with me now I am going through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil.

What a hope we have as Christian believers. And the God of the Bible gives us hope. Jesus said to the Sadducees you are wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven.

That is Jesus' way of saying there is no procreation in the afterlife. Okay this was all about procreation. Some people worry and say does that mean I'm not going to be married to my husband or wife or as far as we know there is no marriage there's no procreation.

[ 26 : 06 ] Does that mean that the importance of that marriage relationship ends? No of course not. It will be even more special. Will it be shared with other people?

Yes it will. It just means that there will be no marriage ceremonies in heaven because there is no procreation. The eternal world will be a world of life.

But this world is where new life is created. So Jesus says no you're going to be like the angels of heaven. That doesn't mean to say by the way that we're going to be dressed in white shining ones that float around in the sky.

We will be very physical. We will be like the angels in heaven in the sense that we will share their domain and we will also share their immortality. But we will be distinct from angels as well because they are different to us.

But the point is that Jesus believed that there was a very real afterlife in which life would continue in which relationships would continue in which you would be supremely happy and in which you will be alive.

[ 27 : 13 ] because he then goes on to say and as for the resurrection of the dead have you not read what was said to you by God I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob he is not the God of the dead but of the living.

It's a very clever thing that he does here. The Sadducees only accept the first five books of Moses so Jesus quotes from Exodus and says remember when God revealed himself as the great I am remember when he declared his name to you as Yahweh he says I am the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob not I was or not even I will be but I am why?

Because they are now alive with God in the eternal present. I am means I am continuously with you. I am I exist and I exist with in the presence of Abraham Isaac and Jacob they're not dead they're alive he is the God of the living not the dead.

and that's remarkable. So when our loved ones die and we think oh they're gone they're dead no they're not dead they're not gone they're alive they're alive in the presence of God there is a gap between them and us so that we cannot see them yet in that eternal world but they are more alive than they have ever been before as McKinley said I die but I am nearer my God to thee.

and that adds such a comfort to death I am alive one day D.L. Moody said one day you will hear that D.L. Moody has died don't you believe it D.L. Moody will be more alive than he has ever been before and as I've told you one of my favorite of all Dallas Willard when he said the death to him he said it would be like waking up in the morning you'll wake up in the morning and somehow you might discover oh this is death this is death of course it's just an amusing way of saying that's what it'll be like you know we will breathe our last we'll be awake and if somebody happened to mention by the way you just died did I?

[ 29 : 40 ] wow is that all it was? is that all it was? I am the resurrection Jesus says and the life the person who lives and believes in me will never die do you believe it?

Jesus said that at a funeral and his friend Martha and Mary they said but Jesus if you'd been here my brother would not have died they were weeping and more and everybody else was weeping Jesus joined in and had a bit of a weep as well because of the sadness that death brought but he said look lift your eyes lift your eyes Martha and Mary your brother's not dead well I know he'll rise again at the last day if you believe in me you know you'll never die I don't know how much you've got in the bank but it's not more than that death I don't know what hope you have in the world but you don't have a greater hope than that death is not something that holds you death is not something that grips you if you believe in Jesus you have the hope of eternal life and you know you have that hope because of the power of

God when Paul was writing to the Corinthians he was writing to them about resurrection because they had been influenced by the Greeks who told them that well your body is not important and then your body will die you will float away to some ethereal world somewhere else and you live forever in a disembodied state and Paul says this to them someone will ask how are the dead raised with what kind of body do they come you foolish person what you saw does not come to life unless it dies and what you saw is not the body that is to be but a bear kernel perhaps of wheat or of some other grain but God gives it a body as one kind of humans another for animals and another for birds and another for fish there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies but the glory of the heavenly is one of a kind and the glory of the earthy is of another there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars for stars differ from stars in glory it is sown in weakness it is raised in power it is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body if there is a natural body there also will be a spiritual body as it is written the first man

Adam became a living being and the last Adam became a living spirit but it is not the spiritual! Wow that's wonderful isn't it?

Let me tell you what that kind of means very simply think of a seed that you put in the ground you think I put that seed in and I'm going to wait and then I'm going to harvest some seeds no you're not I put my potato seeds in and I'm going to harvest potatoes it's a great word I wish I was Irish now how do you say it yeah that yeah or if you're from southern island it would be different again

potatoes you know what it is you know you kind of plant a seed and you get a harvest of fruit it doesn't look the same Paul says the earthly body is one thing but it's nothing compared to the heavenly body if you want to know what the heavenly body is going to be like you have to think of Jesus and his resurrection power his resurrection body it's an amazing thing it looks physical it is physical but it's also spiritual and supernatural it is no longer restricted by time and space it is no longer hindered by deterioration decay you know we look in the mirror and we think

[ 34 : 07 ] I need to get slimmer I need to get more muscly I need to do my exercise I need to keep myself looking good but you know we all get older it's wearing out but the heavenly body will never wear out the heavenly body is eternal the heavenly body is a body like Jesus and so Paul says I tell you this brothers flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable behold I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed let me tell you a little story it'll embarrass Eve but she doesn't mind I'm sure she was at school the other day and she heard a trumpet didn't you she heard a trumpet and she was doing her studies and she thought Jesus is coming but she thought

I must listen out for the second one it didn't happen the school bell rang yeah she embarrassed bless her I just thought isn't it wonderful I wonder how many people in that school were thinking Jesus is coming listen my friend there will be a trumpet blast and Jesus will come and one day we will look to the sky and we will not see a sun we will not see a moon we will not see stars we will see Jesus coming on the clouds with his angels from heaven and at that moment we will be caught up to be with him in the air and forever with the Lord in a moment we will change deserve that hallelujah thank you and this mortal will put on immortality and this perishable will put on imperishable and you will look your best and you will be your best hallelujah there is a resurrection life and the resurrection life is available for you now and so last slide please

Josh the big question Jesus says I am the resurrection of life he who believes in me even though he die yet will he live and whoever lives and believes in me will never die and he stopped by saying this do you believe this do you believe this in the end it comes down to what you believe for he will never force himself upon you he will never make you be what you do not want to be but if you want a blessed hope if you want a happy hope if you want the hope of eternal life if you want hope beyond the grave then you need to believe!

this believe in Jesus believe that that is a blessed hope and this is a picture of William Franklin William Franklin was the founding father one of the founding fathers of modern day America the writer of the American Constitution he had been a printer and when he died it was written on his tomb stone the following the body of Benjamin Franklin printer like the cover of an old book its contents worn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding lies here food for worms yet the work itself shall not be lost for it will as he believed appear once more in a new and more beautiful edition corrected and amended by its author what a belief what a belief what a hope

Peter says blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is it your hope it can be today it can be yours today it can be yours now if you will open your heart to Jesus he wants you far more than you want him that's why you're here today that's where you begin today let us pray