

About the Dead Rising

Mark 12:18-27

Last week, I had you look outside at the mountains and imagine one of them a pile of gold coins. Even if you were given all that...there is something far better. Investing instead, where treasure never ends. It's easy to talk about living for the next life but it's another thing to do it. That takes faith, doesn't it? Some have hope. I recently had a spiritual conversation with one of our elders and he said we're going to be surprised that we were so enthralled with playing in this mud puddle, when we get to heaven. Sadly, many Christians avoid the subject of heaven...fearing it's strangeness or bored with the idea of floating in the clouds with a harp singing the same songs forever. Others are entertained by the world's mockery and deceptions about the afterlife. The horror industry is having a heyday. And that's just where Satan wants us: off the road of truth, fantasizing about killing the walking dead or running away from it. It's just fear for fun, right? God has warned us not to mess with the spirit world wrongly since the earliest writings. We should know better.

For our own good, God has given us some details about His plans for our future life. God's Word on the last

things was meant to motivate...some to repent and others for hope. Those who believe get this faraway look sometimes, homesick to be with Jesus in heaven. I saw that look in a man just the other day. Paul explains this so well in Rom 8:18-30. The troubles of this world are nothing compared to the glory that will come because of Christ. The whole creation waits...groaning in decay, waiting to be freed along with the children of God. Do we get this longing - homesick to be with our Savior and Lord? Do we long to be free from these sin infected, decaying bodies - to receive indestructible, incorruptible ones?

How can I count on something I've never seen?

God gives us a hope that waits patiently (Rom 8:25). But it's not an ignorant hope.

If your still unsure about your future hope, hang in there...more to come. If you want to be assured there is more in store for us than this life, you've come to the right place.

Pray

Have you recently thought about what kind of body you might get when this one is done? Is everyone going to get one? Will we be able to recognize people from our first life? Do we just

go into a cosmic sleep and wake up in our final condition? Is there a place called paradise where we wait till all the final things take place? These questions and many more have been studied for centuries. The formal name for seeking to understand God's final plans is called Eschatology.

(Repeat)

Wouldn't it be amazing if we had a YouTube video...I mean written instructions about our future hope? And some verifiable evidence. A person who has experienced life in the other realm already. Someone who's already been in one of these new bodies. We could have the inside scoop! Sorry, just a sec, I'm receiving a text. Oh, we have it already?

Today, we're going to be schooled by Lord Jesus – Creator/Savior, Spirit realm traveler and afterlife proof (all in one). This passage and many more helps us form a hope built on God's facts. God reveals His plans to those who believe. Scriptures tells us that God's wisdom and the mystery of salvation was hidden from the rulers of the world...otherwise they would not have crucified Christ (1 Cor 2:6-8). We should not be surprised the world can't get it right. Instead, God reveals His will by His Spirit (v10): *"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has*

prepared for those who love him" (v9)

Paul is saying that the apostles could not have seen, heard or imagined God's salvation plan on their own. It's too amazing. It was revealed to them by the Spirit. And by the Spirit, we can understand things about eternal life: our resurrection, Christ's return to rule, the final judgement, all things made new and life with God forever. We turn again to Mark 12. It's Tuesday of Jesus' final week before paying our ransom. Jesus has been fielding questions from groups sent by the Sanhedrin. And now Jesus is approached by a group who usually stays behind the scenes in loftier places. But this one time they come down to face Him among the crowds at the Temple.

v18 Sadducee Sect

To simplify things a bit, there were two main sects overseeing the Jewish faith. And they both began during the Maccabean revolt when Jewish patriots wrestled back control of their homeland from the Greeks. We've heard a lot about the Pharisees – who believed the Old Testament...Gods rule over everything including the Spirit world...angels, heaven, hell etc. Unfortunately, their progressive thinking also included the traditions of the elders which had contaminated the way of God beyond repair. The other main sect is the Sadducees.

None of their own writings have survived...only what their enemies said about them. They were wealthy aristocrats willing to cooperate with the Romans for political advantage. Religiously, they focused on the high priesthood and the temple. If the Pharisees were too welcoming of new ideas about the bible, the Sadducees were the opposite...extremely conservative. Conservative people hold to traditional attitudes and values. They are cautious about change or innovation. This can be great. But when it comes to the Bible, an extremely conservative person may avoid or explain away Scripture and people that push their traditional thinking. Since the enlightenment, many scholars have tried to explain away miracles in the Bible. The Sadducees were so conservative, didn't believe much beyond what they couldn't see (resurrection, heaven, angels – Acts 23:8). No wonder they were so concerned about control and power on earth. Many believe the Sadducees only counted the five books of Moses as God's word. Hard to say for sure. The Sadducees were confident that they could trap Jesus with a question from the law of Moses (Deut 25:5). They're trying to make the idea of life after death look silly. Satan's servants steal hope because people who hope

in heaven are hard to control and bargain with.

v19 Moses and Levirate Marriage

There were many specific laws for the Israelites...for that specific time.

Moses was God's servant for conveying His will. People use *Levirate* (Latin for brother-in-law) because it gets around saying the brother-in-law, law. The protection of family line and land goes all the way back to Genesis 38:8 (Story of Tamar and Judah's family). It sounds rather desperate to our ears because we are not called to preserve the bloodline of God's chosen people. We are graphed into God's family as a faithline...all the way back to Abraham. There is a beautiful story about a woman who married into a Jewish family but her husband died. She remained loyal to her in-law family, even with no prospect of security. God rewarded her faithfulness when her match-making mother-in-law, Naomi, showed her how to gain the affections of a kind man - a relative to continue the family name. The twist is that by tradition, the closer relative is to fulfill the pledge...and it's not the one they like. So if you want to find out how this Levirate law plays out, read Ruth this week. She became part of the family line of Jesus and so is Tamar.

v20-23 Chaos at the Resurrection?

There is some hope of resurrection hinted in the Old Testament (Job 19:25-27, Ps 16:9-11; 49:14-15, Isa 26:19, Dan 12:1-3). But not specifically mentioned in the books of Moses. This little scenario was probably used time and time again against the Pharisees. They hope to stump Jesus with a dilemma (Greek – twice premise). Think of a rodeo cowboy having to choose which horn to fall on. It's a form of argument involving a choice between equally unfavorable answers. Who deserves to be the woman's husband in heaven? This is a great example of using human logic on scripture to suit one's own purposes.

V24 Discerning Error

Jesus does not expect them to answer the first question...have you lead yourselves astray? It's the kind of question parents ask their children – are you not thinking? The child stares blankly waiting for an explanation. Jesus tells these experts of the law: these religious big wigs - that their thinking has wandered off the path of God's truth. Why? They don't understand God's word. If you don't understand God's word, you can't apply it right. And if you don't have faith, you won't experience God's power either.

V25 When the Dead Rise

Can you hear the authority in Jesus' voice? Not 'if' the dead shall rise but

'when' the dead shall rise. This is a taste of the new wine Jesus brings (Mk 2:22). This is the reason the temple system and all its leadership could not be reformed. Reform is not revolutionary enough. In Christ, a new covenant begins. The Sadducees have a vice grip on their old wineskins and will not change to new ones...even though the teaching and miracles and mercy that Jesus brings is a wine that will ruin their containers. Their hearts are too hard listen to God.

Now it's time for Jesus to school their wrong ideas about heaven. Marriage? Heaven is so beyond our experience here, the potentially closest human we have cannot compare to what it will be like. There will be a new order. We will be more *like* the angels in heaven - never dying and not marrying. Not made into angels. Luke's account helps make that clear (20:35-36).

Will we be reunited with those we love? Jesus was recognizable when He rose again. Moses and Elijah were recognizable (9:4) so it follows. God is good, yes? Can we believe that God has in store for us a level of relationship with others that surpasses marriage? That is what I choose to believe. The next realm will surpass this decaying one in every way.

The Sadducees made their own conclusions about the afterlife. That it goes on with the same conditions as life here. The Scriptures don't support that idea. "With one stroke Jesus sweeps away the seven men that the Sadducees use in their self-deception. The horns of the dilemma on which Jesus is to impale himself crumple up and fade into nothing." (R. C. H. Lenski)

The Bible has quite a bit to say about our bodily resurrection from the dead.

V26-27 Proof From Moses (Right back acha)

Jesus reaffirms that actual dead people shall rise again. He uses a famous passage that applies to the identity of any good Jew. The Sadducees used a passage that only applied to some...and there are doubts this was still in practice in Jesus' day.

Jesus magnifies the very words of Scripture to draw attention to God's truth...not some human idea. Jesus' example connects to God's promise. Jesus demonstrates again His supreme authority about God. And His deduction is that God has plans for His people beyond the grave. Ongoing and continuous. We received an insider's glimpse of this on the mountain with Peter James and John (Mk 9:3). On Sunday of that very week, Jesus will become God's proof that we will rise again.

Handling God's Word Correctly

The two main sects of the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus represent 2 extremes for understanding Scripture that we want to stay away from.

Extreme Liberalism...accepting all kinds of ideas outside of scriptural too. That's the road many have traveled since the 1800s. The acceptance of the theory of evolution has led to all kinds of improper questioning and skepticism of God's Word. Extreme liberal thinking is also at the core of new cults masquerading as Christian...altering or adding to scripture. It's at the core of New Age Movement – use whatever belief system that suits you. It is making God in the image of people. All lies of Satan.

Extreme Conservatism...is narrow-minded. It carries forward one interpretation, standard and purpose at the expense of ignoring the whole counsel of God. It can show up in personality driven churches and cults. It shows up where it's an advantage to be exclusive and push others away. These people are very convincing as they explain their path of memorized scripture and understanding of God's will. It also shows up when the church and state are combined (ie 15th, 16th C). Extreme conservatives and liberals handed Jesus over to be crucified. They fight against God. The Bible

records their end, along with Satan, death and hades into the lake of fire in Revelation 20.

Jesus reminds us to know the Scriptures and know God's power.

Both happen by belief. Taste and see that God is good and able.

A person who handles the word of God well, approaches humbly and in prayer. When we pray believing, God will give us wisdom and the Holy Spirit will guide our steps in obedience. And it will be motivated by love...for God hears our requests that are free of grudges.

We often come back to these three: Faith Hope and Love.

Today we have focused most on the hope of our resurrection to heaven.

We need that hope. Perhaps you come today with a heaviness. Perhaps things in this life have not turned out like you hoped. Maybe you have become skeptical of good that is yet to come. Story from Randy Alcorn's book, Heaven.

In 1952, young Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. She'd already been the first woman to swim both ways across the English Channel. The weather was foggy and chilly; she could hardly see the boats accompanying her. Still, she swam for 15 hours. When she begged

to be taken out of the water, her mother, in a boat alongside, told her she was close and that she could make it. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, she stopped swimming and was pulled out. It wasn't until she was on the boat that she discovered the shore was less than half a mile away. At a news conference the next day she said, "All I could see was the fog... I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."

For believers, that shore is being with Lord Jesus where He promised to prepare a place for us (Jn 14:1-3). God means to help us see through the fog of this world and picture our eternal home with God. And this hope does not disappoint.

"Now we know that if the earthly tent [physical body] we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling." 4

2 Cor. 5:1-2

And who puts that desire in our hearts?

"Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away

from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5:5-7

What we owe God is to love Him number one. This will deepen our longing to be with Him in heaven and also deepen our purpose while we're here. The more we know God the more we can say like Paul, that God works for our good (Rom 8:28). He is for us! He didn't even spare His Son for us. Not even death will be able to separate us from God's love. (8:38-39)

God designed us to be homesick for heaven. Brothers and sisters, we will share eternal life first and foremost with Almighty God...a relationship to deepen today.