

Raising the Dead

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John 5.19 - 29

I have considered the topic of healing on the past two Sundays. The topic was prompted by the three examples of divine healing found in John's Gospel. Divine healing isn't exclusive to the first century; throughout the past 2,000 years there have been countless verifiable reports of healing that can only be explained by the supernatural intervention of God. However, despite healing during our earthly lives, our bodies continue to deteriorate and eventually we will all physically die. There will be few who will escape physical death and I will mention them later.

However, physical death is not the end of the story; the truth is, sickness and disease are contrary to God's design and He desires all His children to be physically healed. One day He will do just that – it is only a matter of timing.

When Jesus healed the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda, which happened on a Sabbath, the Jews immediately turned their attention to the man whom Jesus healed, carrying his bed. According to their law, carrying his bed exceeded the amount of work he was permitted to do on a Sabbath. Hence, they took great exception to him doing so. They were so fixated on their law and the man carrying his bed that the *miracle* escaped their notice. An exchange followed with Jesus and by way of summary we are told the Jews not only were determined to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, but also because Jesus called God His Father, thereby making Himself equal with God (John 5.18). It is important to realize that there was no doubt among the Jewish leaders about who Jesus claimed to be – He claimed to be God!

Jesus then expanded on the inseparable unity between Him and His Father. He stated that the Son can do nothing of His own accord; He can only do what He sees the Father doing (John 5.19). Further it is not possible to honor the Father without honoring the Son and vice versa (5.18). As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, likewise, the Son gives life to whom He will (5.21). That introduces us to the passage which we will give attention to today – a passage that highlights Jesus giving life to the dead – something entrusted to Him by His Father. Jesus' promise to give life to the dead, which ultimately includes full and complete physical healing, is detailed in a two-fold promise; the first part is:

The Dead Made Alive Spiritually

Jesus introduced His promise to give life to the dead with an emphatic appeal. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24, ESV). **Truly, truly**, is a translation of **Amen! Amen!** In the King James Version, it is rendered, **Verily! Verily!** The goal of course is to stress the pivotal importance of what Jesus says, i.e., listen very carefully!

1. The Scope of The Promise

The use of the term **whoever** makes it clear that this promise is offered to everyone; no one is ruled out. No exclusion is made based on gender, education, age, ethnicity, social standing, position in society, or any other category. Everyone is eligible to receive what Jesus' offers. Thus, everyone needs to listen and pay attention to this extremely important declaration from the mouth of God. In our independent world where most think truth is determined **by what they think it is**, it is especially important to listen carefully; our utmost attention is essential. God is the final arbiter of truth.

2. The Condition of The Promise

While the scope of the promise includes everyone, everyone does not automatically receive what is promised. The promise Jesus' declared is conditional; it is contingent on people's response. There are two conditions: **hearing** and **believing**. Jesus makes it clear to people they must hear, "**My Word**" i.e., the very word from God. People need to hear His message! Namely, the Gospel of salvation which unfolds not just in the pages of the Gospel of John, but throughout the entire Bible. It is the reason for which Jesus left the glories of heaven and came to earth.

The second condition relates to Who people are to **believe**. Namely, believe "*Him who sent Me [Jesus Christ].*" Because of God's love for the world, He sent His Son (John 3:16) and He sent Him for a reason, "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). Thus, God the Father validates the message Jesus declared. The integral relationship between God's message and His Messenger is evident in **Hebrews 1:2** (ESV), "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

Obviously, *hearing* encompasses more than just *hearing* the sound of words, but paying attention to those words and acting upon them. For example, even the devil and his demonic realm are fully aware who Jesus is – nevertheless, they chose to reject Him. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (James 2:19, NIV84). Multitudes have heard the Gospel; many can describe it accurately; but despite being able to do so, they don't believe God and His message! Using a phrase that has become common in the past several years, many people classify God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ as, *fake news*! They believe God is lying to them.

The fundamentals of hearing the truth followed by acceptance of it are conveyed in **Ephesians 1:13** (ESV), "In him you also, **when you heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation, **and believed in him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

People must individually decide what they will do with Jesus and His message to them.

The invitation in John 5:24 to believe God mirrors the repetitive appeal at the end of each of the letters to the *Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation*, "**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 23, ESV). Receiving God's promise necessitates a personal response.

3. The Content of the Promise

Jesus clearly delineated what He promised to those who hear and embrace His word and believe His Father Who sent Him. He promised them two things: eternal life and no judgment (John 5:24). We need not guess about what eternal life is for it is described in **John 17:3** (ESV), “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Eternal life is an intimate relationship with God – a relationship that is also eternal in duration.

And its bookend is, “*He does not come into judgment.*” He will not face the penalty for his own sins because he has placed his faith in Jesus who has already paid for them at the cross. In other words, he receives a “*Get out of jail free*” card for the punishment which he deserves.

The reason a person receives eternal life and escapes punishment is because he/she has passed from death to life. They have made a **transition** – in the NIV it is translated, “**crossed over** from death to life.” The person has crossed over from the side filled with people who are dead in their sins to the other side where people are alive in Christ. An occasional practice of *Members of Parliament* pictures the crossing over from death to life. If a MP decides to change parties, they literally get up from their seat in the *House of Commons* and cross the floor to the other side and take a seat with that party. When a person hears and believes the Gospel, they cross over from the spiritually dead who are without God and without hope, to those who are spiritually alive and in the presence of God and have eternal hope.

4. The Timing of the Promise

Lest anyone not comprehend Jesus’ message the first time, Jesus restated it. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (John 5:25, ESV).

Notice the language He used; it contains both a **Right Now** as well as a **Not Yet** element. “**An hour is coming,**” looks to the future and refers to something which will happen later; an event down the road. “**And is now here,**” focuses on the present; something that is available and happening right now. The **right now** part, refers to the spiritually dead who are lost in sin and consequently headed to hell, but who hear the voice of God beckoning. They not only hear the sound of the words, but accept and believe them, and act upon them. Those who hear and act on them **will live** – they are made alive spiritually. They are forgiven of their sins and regenerated or born-again. They become a new creation and are indwelt with Holy Spirit and thereafter can commune with God. “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” (John 5:26, ESV).

That is the **Right Now** part – being made alive spiritually; the **Not Yet** part of the promise follows from it – it is:

The Dead Made Alive Physically

Throughout all history people have longed to live forever and people have come up with all kinds of scenarios to accomplish that, but only the Bible accurately tells us how.

1. The Content of the Promise

John 5:28–29 (ESV) "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

"**Do not marvel at this**," refers to what immediately precedes. Don't marvel at being made alive spiritually because it is only the first step. The second step is even more amazing! Those who are in the tombs, refers to those who are physically dead. One day they will hear the voice of God and come out – they will be resurrected from the dead. Just imagine the scene – if you were standing by a cemetery, you would see figures appearing from the graves.

2. The Timing of the Promise

When will this happen? **Matthew 24:36** (ESV) "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." God has unequivocally promised to resurrect those who are dead; however, He hasn't given us the time it will happen. While some claim to know the date, **only God knows when it will happen, but happen it will!**

The fulfillment of this promise will be announced with a loud command, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet call of God (1 Thessalonians 4.16). The command will be so compelling the dead will hear it and respond to it. The promise to resurrect the dead is unconditional – God will resurrect everyone – both the righteous and the unrighteous. People have no choice about being resurrected; it will happen to those who love the Lord and long for His appearing as well as the most ardent atheists who steadfastly asserted there is no God.

The first to be resurrected will be those who are trusting in Jesus for their salvation; they will recognize the voice of their Shepherd. A thousand years later, after the millennium described in Revelation 20, those who didn't believe the Gospel and chose to trust in their own efforts instead of Jesus' offer of forgiveness and eternal life, will also be resurrected as noted in John 5.28-29. Revelation 20:5 provides some of the specifics on the resurrection of unbelievers, "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended." Unfortunately, their resurrection will not be pleasant – they will be resurrected unto judgment. Their destiny will be dramatically different from those who trust Jesus and whose names have been recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15, ESV). For unbelievers it will be horrific – and it will never get any better – they will be forever consigned to a world without hope, without God, and face to face with the devil and his demonic realm.

3. The Details of the Promise

Many of the details regarding God's children are found in the following passage:

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.” **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (ESV)**

The Lord will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise from their graves to meet Him. They will then be joined by those believers who are physically alive on earth and who will be transformed into resurrection bodies and will meet the Lord in the air. They are the group of people who will not die physically.

This is the **Not Yet** part of God's promise – the resurrection of believers.

⁵¹Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in 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.” **1 Corinthians 15:51–52, (ESV).**

We shall be like Him

“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

Consider some observations we can make from Jesus' resurrection. Luke 24.13 – 31 describes the encounter of two men who were walking from Jerusalem to a village named Emmaus and were talking about the crucifixion of Jesus. While they walked and talked, Jesus, whom they didn't recognize, joined them and walked with them and took part in the conversation about what had happened. They were not alarmed when He joined them; He obviously appeared like them; He was human in form. They were prevented from recognizing Him and it was only after He explained the Scriptures to them and as they ate together that their eyes were opened to recognize it was Jesus.

Or consider the account in John 20.11 – 17 which describes Mary weeping outside Jesus' tomb. When Jesus appeared to Mary, she initially mistook Him for the gardener (15). Or the account in John 21.1 – 14 which details the disciples going fishing and when they returned, Jesus was on the shore preparing breakfast. At first, they didn't recognize it was Jesus.

A point to glean from these descriptions is that Jesus' resurrected body fit in – He didn't look like *Casper the ghost*. At first glance He looked like other humans in appearance, except He

now had a resurrected physical body. His resurrected body gives us some insight into what ours will be like. Undoubtedly there will be some details related to Jesus' body that will differ from ours. Perhaps while He can appear and disappear and move through solid walls, we won't be able to, but by and large our resurrected bodies will be similar to our current bodies and similar in appearance to His.

There will be one major thing that will differ from our current bodies. All the effects of sin will be gone. All the remnants and scars from disease will be totally gone; eyesight and hearing will be fully restored to God's design specifications; joints will all be replaced; there will be no more pain to contend with. At last, we will be fully and completely and supernaturally healed.

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **Revelation 21:4** (ESV)

Everyone is going to be resurrected! However, the destiny of those who hear God's Word and believe it will be radically different from those who reject it. That destiny will be determined by what people choose to do during their life on earth.

Sandi Patty - *We Shall Behold Him*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVza89G8Sbw&ab_channel=JIMMYROCK