

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Jesus Proves the Resurrection

Matthew 22:23-33

What is the most significant moment in human history?

New Zealand born evangelist Ray Comfort answers the question this way:

Unquestionably, the greatest event was the faint sound of a heartbeat in a cold and lifeless body in a tomb, two thousand years ago. The sound of blood rushing through the heart of Jesus of Nazareth was a sound that will thunder throughout eternity, because of its incredible implications.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most significant moment in human history... it changes EVERYTHING

And yet... there are many in the world who utterly deny not only the resurrection of Jesus but that resurrection is even possible

While there are others who have radically different views on the afterlife

I. Introduction: Is Death the End?

A. Job's Question... Everyone Asks

Job 14:14 If a man dies, will he live again?

All over the world, a common thread in human experience has been the hope in an afterlife... that this world is not all there is

From the Pyramids of Egypt, which were built in preparation for the afterlife...

To the vast terracotta army of the First Emperor of China, crafted to help the Emperor rule in the afterlife...

To the coin placed in the mouth of the dead by the ancient Greeks to pay the ferryman for the boatride across the River Styx...

To the habit of some plains Indians of burying a dead warrior with a pony with a bow and arrows to help him hunt in the happy hunting grounds...

To the Eskimos of Greenland who bury a guide dog with a deceased person to help guide him through the cold wasteland of death

All over the world, it seems we see lived out the truth of Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has also set eternity in the hearts of men

Yet... at the same time many people have questions about the afterlife...

B. Website: Hypography

1. Young person named Kizzi writes

“Will my death be the end of my existence? And is there nothing I can do about it?”

2. Learned scholar’s answer:

Unfortunately, all signs (scientific signs, that is) seem to point in that direction, Kizzi.

And I tend to agree.

All I can give you is my opinion, regarding matters metaphysical. And as far as this matter is concerned, I'm of the opinion that death can be described as the failure of a body to metabolize. Once you're dead, you're dead. We don't want to believe it, though, because we don't want to waste our lives to die without anything to look forward to. Self-deception can be a wonderful thing, but at the same time, very dangerous.

Asking what lies in store for us after death is about as meaningful as asking what you remember from before your birth. With pretty much the same answer, I imagine. Before your birth, you didn't exist. And after your eventual death, well... you won't exist, either. So, in short, you won't be around to worry about it!

But never fear - if you make full use of your potential, what you are, what you can become and what you want to be, you'll enjoy the ride. But remember to stop and smell the roses along the way, because you'll never get the chance again!

3. The Uuncyclopedia: Describing the Nothingness that Awaits us

In your first and final venture into deadness, you may notice how the weather is neither hot nor cold, and how there are no rainy days or sunny days. Or more specifically, you may have noticed how "weather" does not exist. Do not be alarmed. In fact, you may find in your dead state that approximately 100% of the sensations and phenomena you were familiar with in your living days are conspicuously non-existent.

— Uuncyclopedia, "You Are Dead

4. Quentin Crisp, English atheist and gay-rights activist

The absolute nothingness of death is a blessing. Something to look forward to

5. Epicurus

Epicurus, Greek philosopher (341-270 BCE).

As a Materialist, Epicurus accepted the idea that the soul consists of atomic material which disintegrates at death, at which time all sensation ceases. Consequently, he said, death need not be a matter of anxious concern, inasmuch as it is merely the state in which all sensation ceases

6. Mark Twain

Asked if he feared death, he said he did not, in view of the fact that he had been dead for billions and billions of years before he was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.

For centuries, skeptics have existed who doubt the existence of the afterlife and who live for this life alone... the Sadducees were in that category in Jesus' time

Imagine the encounter between some clever, witty debaters who think they have proven that there can be no resurrection and the man who made this claim:

John 11:25-26 I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

II. The Sadducees: Enemies of the Resurrection

Matthew 22:23 That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

A. Context: "That same day..."

1. It is the last week of Jesus' life
2. Jesus' enemies are attacking Him viciously to try to discredit Him and eventually to kill Him
3. They opposed His triumphal entry; denounced the children who cried "Hosannah"; demanded to see His credentials when He cleansed the temple
4. Here in this chapter, a series of challengers try to take Him on one after another; first the Herodians and Pharisees on the issue of taxation; now here the Sadducees; next an expert in the Law
5. Their goal is all the same: besting Jesus in debate and dragging Him down to His demise

B. Who Were the Sadducees?

1. The smallest, but by far the most wealthy and influential of the Jewish religious sects (Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots)
2. The Sadducees were aristocratic, controlled the temple, the operation of the priesthood, and the Sanhedrin
3. It was through the corrupt temple concession system that they became staggeringly wealthy
4. The high priest and chief priests were almost invariably Sadducees
5. Politically, they were pro-Roman, because it was only by Roman permission that they retained their positions of wealth and power
6. Spiritually, they were an odd combination of extreme literalists (like in the passage today) and liberals who denied the Scripture

Acts 23:8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

III. Their “Unanswerable” Test Case: Seven Brothers, One Woman

Matthew 22:24-28 "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. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

A. Can Jesus Be Trapped? Can God Be Mocked?

1. They thought they had an unanswerable test case... proof that Christ couldn't refute that there was no resurrection
2. Just like the Pharisees and Herodians on taxation, they thought they could trap Jesus... that he had no escape
3. But Jesus' mind soars as high above theirs as the heavens are above the earth

Isaiah 55:9 As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

4. God cannot be mocked (Galatians 6) and neither can Jesus be trapped

B. Using the Law of Moses: Levirate Marriage

Levirate marriage is a type of marriage in which a woman is required to marry her deceased husband's brother.

The term is a derivative of the Latin word *levir*, meaning "husband's brother"

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

C. Ridiculous Test Case... That Probably Never Happened

1. Seven brothers, all unmarried
2. First one takes a wife, then dies without children
3. Second one marries her, but also dies without children
4. So on down to the seventh

I would contend that the seventh brother that married this black widow is among the most courageous men in the Bible!

5. Finally, the woman dies
6. Question:

Matthew 22:28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

D. Their Assumptions

1. the next life will be just like this one
2. While polygamy is probably acceptable, polyandry (one woman married to many husbands) clearly isn't

E. Their Conclusion

Resurrection CANNOT HAPPEN!!!

IV. Jesus' Timeless Answer: I Am Abraham's God... Now

A. Judging the Sadducees

Vs. 29 "You are in error..."

1. Jesus is the Judge of All the Earth

2. Jesus is able to assess thoughts, attitudes of the heart and motives
3. He also addresses right and wrong, truth and error... and He always judges by truth
4. Out with relativism!!
 - a. Postmodernism denies absolute spiritual truth
 - b. Postmodernism embraces relative truth... each one of us finding our own truth
 - c. It sees that we live in a pluralistic age and a world of many ideologies; the fierce holding of such ideologies has led to wars and much suffering
 - d. So some people seek to eradicate such truth commitments at least in terms of the way we communicate with each other

Postmodern values:

tolerance, patience, respect for differences, a willingness to listen, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the ability to reinterpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint in order that others may "have a turn" to speak, and the disposition to express one's self honestly and sincerely

- e. Jesus didn't live like this AT ALL... He winnowed out truth and error decisively, with absolute truth

"You are in error.." he told the Sadducees

What gave Him the right?

John 5:22-23 the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

John 5:30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

Jesus stands in front of our postmodern world and judges our thoughts... based on the Scripture, they are either true or false

And He gives us this invitation... which He also spoke to Pontius Pilate:

John 18:37-38 for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." ³⁸"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

B. Error Comes from Two Related Forms of Ignorance

1. Jesus does more than just tell the Sadducees they are wrong... He probes deeper to the ROOT CAUSES of their error on the resurrection

“You are in error BECAUSE...”

And He gives two reasons

“you don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God...”

The root cause is IGNORANCE... sinful, willful ignorance, rejection of what they knew... but at root, they don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God

2. “You don’t know the Scriptures”

- a. We can be familiar with the words of the Bible, and still not know the Scriptures
- b. The Sadducees would have been offended at this statement... they CAME to Jesus with a Scriptural test case, the Law of Moses
- c. But there is an infinite journey from the first hearing of the words of God and truly knowing the Scriptures completely and perfectly as Jesus did
- d. Jesus is about to refer to a very familiar passage—the account of the burning bush—and show them something they’ve never seen before

Dear friends: please NEVER STOP learning the Bible! I guarantee there’s more in there than you think there is

“Familiarity breeds contempt”... people become familiar with the Bible and they stop learning

God has told us everything we need for life and godliness

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

ALL ERROR IN THE CHURCH comes from this root... we don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God like we should

- Disagreement and controversies over predestination are because we don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God
- Disagreement and controversies over divorce and remarriage are because we don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God
- Disagreement and controversies over women in ministry are because we don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God
- Disagreement and controversies over worship style are because we don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God

- Disagreement and controversies over charismatic gifts are because we don't know the Scriptures or the power of God

When such disagreements and controversies occur, we ought to humble ourselves and ask God's forgiveness for not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God like we should

3. "You don't know the power of God"
 - a. Power could mean authority
 - b. Or power could refer to God's ability to do anything... that nothing is impossible with God
 - c. The Sadducees probably denied the bodily resurrection because they didn't know how God could do it... the body is destroyed completely by death; worms eat it; sea creatures eat it; fire burns it; IT IS GONE... entirely gone; how can God resurrect it? It makes NO SENSE
 - d. The philosophers of Paul's day questioned the resurrection; like the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill

Acts 17:32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered

- e. So also the urbane, witty, scholarly atheists of our day MOCK the resurrection

C. Revelation: The Future World Different Than the Present World

Matthew 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

1. This is taught nowhere in the Bible, but Jesus simply asserts it
2. He is giving new information CONSISTENT with existing biblical revelation but going beyond it
3. Implications
 - a. The next world will be significantly different than this one
 - b. YET ALSO there will be significant similarity (the resurrection is a matter of continuity)
 - c. The present world: people get marry and have children to fulfill God's original command: ***Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it***
 - d. In the next world, that will no longer be needed... the number of human souls will be fixed and finite

e. Angels do not marry... further implications of angelic life go beyond this passage

D. The Living Scripture: “What God Says to You”

1. Jesus next proves the resurrection from an amazingly familiar passage

Matthew 22:31-32 But about the resurrection of the dead-- have you not read what God said to you, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?

2. What interests me is how Jesus introduces the Scripture

“Have you not read what God said TO YOU...”

God said it back then, but then He said it to Moses

But when Moses WROTE IT DOWN, God was saying it to every generation that would follow...

God was SAYING IT TO YOU

3. The root problem: the Sadducees do not believe God speaks through Scripture; they do not therefore have the living relationship with God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did

E. How Jesus Proves the Resurrection from Grammar

1. The proof of the resurrection rests on a simple verb tense in grammar

I AM the God of Abraham, AND the God of Isaac, AND the God of Jacob

2. Remember in the burning bush account, I AM was the key assertion

3. God doesn't begin relationships with us only to have death terminate them

4. God IS RIGHT NOTW the God of Abraham... so Abraham still exists for God to have a relationship with

5. And part of being Abraham's God is to raise Abraham's body from the dead

He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

V. Applications

A. Humble Confession

1. God opposes the proud...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James speaks of God giving us “more grace”... I think the primary avenue of the “more grace” God gives is the Scripture:

Isn't it fascinating that the Apostle Paul almost always opens his epistles with

“Grace to you”

And closes them with

“Grace be with you”

It's the way God gives us more and more grace... in the written word of God

But God only gives it to the humble

So humble yourselves before God and...

2. Be willing to say

“I am in error right now—error in thought and error in lifestyle—because I don't know the Scriptures or the power of God like I ought to.”

3. Be willing to acknowledge personal sin and hardness of heart is the reason

Luke 24:25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

4. Embark anew on a search of the Scriptures

5. Especially come to Jesus to teach you what they mean!!

John 5:39-40 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Jesus alone has the power to take the veil from our eyes and the hardness from our hearts:

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

B. Know the Scriptures

1. God's word is living and active... this is God speaking to you

2. Know the Scriptures in DETAIL... Jesus proves the resurrection from grammar

3. “Familiarity breeds contempt”... God has more yet to show you

4. Habits of Bible intake
 - a. Daily quiet time
 - b. Prayer for insight
 - c. The Indwelling Holy Spirit's role... illumination
 - d. Scripture memorization and meditation
 - e. Listening to good preaching and teaching
 5. In short... be a lifetime learner
- C. Know the Power of God
1. Jesus said the Sadducees were in error ALSO because they didn't know the power of God
 2. So are we!!!
 3. Have you ever meditated on omnipotence... have you stood in front of the vast ocean of God's omnipotence and watched its gentle waters lapping at your feet, knowing that this vast ocean of God's power has also unleashed tsunamis of devastation and hurricanes of energy?
 4. Meditate on this:
- Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...***
- a. What does that mean?
 - b. What does "immeasurably" mean? "Exceeding abundantly beyond..."
 - c. Beyond what? "ANYTHING we can ask or even think"... NIV has ***imagine***
 - d. God can do infinitely more than anything you can formulate in your mind!!
 - e. We are in error because we all UNDERESTIMATE OMNIPOTENCE!!!
We underestimate the power of God
 - f. Abraham relied on the power of God to OBEY the most difficult command he ever received
 - g. We sin because we don't trust God enough
 - i) We ought to be more faithful in evangelism

- ii) We fail because we underestimate how much power God has in us while we share the gospel... we are far too concerned with human reaction
- iii) We ought to put sinful habits to death
- iv) We fail because we underestimate God's power at work in us to obey His commands; we falter and cave in to temptation because we don't know the power of God

5. What is the remedy to not knowing the power of God?

a. Start with Scripture and see what it says about the power of God

- i) God created the universe from nothing with words
- ii) God devastated the entire world with a flood, then removed the flood
- iii) God rescued His people Israel from slavery in Egypt by SOVEREIGN POWER... by ten plagues, and by an awesome Red Sea crossing
- iv) God enabled his feeble little nation to conquer the Promised Land, defeating seven nations who were each larger and more powerful than Israel
- v) God delivered the Jews again and again with supernatural interventions... even killing 185,000 Assyrian troops in one night by the hand of the angel of the Lord
- vi) God rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the flames of the fiery furnace
- vii) God restored the Jews after they sinned, sovereignly moving Cyrus the Great of Persia to allow them to rebuild Jerusalem
- viii) God displayed His power especially in Christ: born of a Virgin by the power of God, kept sinless and holy by the power of God through a lifetime of temptation, enabled to do great signs and wonders by the power of God, dying for the sins of the world by the power of God, raised from the dead by the power of God

Romans 1:4 who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead

- ix) Go through the Bible and say, "What does this passage teach me about the power of God?"

- x) Meditate on what the angel Gabriel said to Mary concerning the miraculous conception of Jesus in her womb:

Luke 1:37 For nothing is impossible with God.

- xi) Meditate on this statement by Jesus

Matthew 19:26 with God all things are possible.

- xii) Paul prays that the Ephesian Christians would know what magnitude of power God is exerting on them to finish their salvation:

- b. Secondly, if you want to grow in a personal sense of the power of God, OBEY His commands in the EXTERNAL JOURNEY... get sacrificially active in evangelism, missions, ministry to the poor and needy; STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORTABLE BUBBLE and venture out on Christ... and you will grow in your sense of the power of God

D. Believe in the Resurrection from the Dead

1. Appeal to non-Christians: believe in the coming world... in heaven and in hell
2. Simple gospel truths:

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time

Romans 10:9-10 if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

3. In His bodily resurrection from the dead, Christ not only proved from Scripture that the resurrection is true... He proved it physically as well

John 20:27-29 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

4. The application of Jesus' resurrection:

John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name

5. Life is knowing God in a love relationship in which your sins are forgiven
6. Trust in Christ
7. To Christians also: BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION
 - a. We may assent to it doctrinally
 - b. But sometimes I think we don't live out daily our faith in the resurrection of the body
 - c. We fight aging by worldly means and with worldly faithlessness... plastic surgery, clinging to youth, wishing we could be young again
 - d. We also grieve for lost ones with a hopelessness that denies the resurrection from the dead
 - e. We ought to pray for sick Christians with a full, open view that

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”

- f. Don't cling to life in this world... believe in the resurrection from the dead
- g. Study the doctrine of the resurrection body

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

- h. Strong faith in the resurrection helps us make sense of the seemingly senseless tragedies in this life

Illus. May 21, 2008, Steven Curtis Chapman's teenaged son Will accidentally hit their adopted five year-old daughter Maria Sue with their SUV and killed her; he never saw her... unspeakable tragedy and grief, and such sorrow is reasonable given the magnitude of what happened; but their strong faith in the resurrection enabled them to not grieve like those who have no hope

Will, 18, said this:

“I'm hanging in there. I have some really hard days. I have some really good days. I know I'm going to see my little sister again. It really is my faith that keeps me going.”

Steven Curtis Chapman said he was “desperately hopeful”... the word hopeful is totally focused on the glorious future they will have in heaven; the resurrection is the foundation to that hope

Just months before the accident, he had written a song for his daughters called “Cinderella: The Love of a Daddy and His Princess”... they would frequently dance together right before bedtime; he thought after that accident he would never be able to sing that song again; but now he sings it in hope:

“I’m going to dance with Maria again.”

That is the power of the doctrine of the resurrection; without it we are “without hope and without God in the world”

E. Develop Your Relationship with God NOW

1. Jesus proved the resurrection by one of the most famous statements in the Old Testament... every Jew would have known it
2. At its core, it’s all about RELATIONSHIP with the Eternal God!!!

“I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob...”

3. Isn’t it AMAZING that God would identify Himself in such menial, low-down terms?

Genesis 18:27 Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes

4. Was Abraham infected with false humility at that moment? Or was he merely relating Scriptural truth?

Genesis 3:19 for dust you are and to dust you will return.

5. And yet, the Lord has lowered Himself to have a relationship with us, though we are nothing but dust and ashes! He even identifies Himself by this terminology—“I am the God of Abraham!”

Hebrews 11:16 God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

6. This is the DEEP DESIRE of God... to have an eternal relationship with us

Jeremiah 24:7 I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 37:26-27 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my

sanctuary among them forever. ²⁷ My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

2 Corinthians 6:16 As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

F. Look Forward to the Consummation of that Relationship in Eternity

1. Since this is the grand desire of God, it should be the central desire of our hearts as well
2. The yearning for intimacy and a love relationship with God should transcend all other desires you have in life
3. Set your heart fully on the grace to be given you when Christ returns... and what is that grace? The consummation of our love relationship with God through Christ

G. Cherish Marriage Now... But Know that it is Temporary

1. The Sadducees used human marriage as a test case to disprove the resurrection
2. Marriage is a glorious gift from God and a rich blessing
3. It is an earthly picture of the relationship between Christ and the church
4. We should seek to have the most magnificent and blessed marriages we can have in Christ
5. BUT we should also realize that marriage is temporary

Matthew 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

6. In heaven, our married lives will not end but be perfected and expanded... perfect unity with each other and with Christ the bridegroom

John 17:21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us

Dear friends, the resurrection is COMING

Soon, this world with all its grief and sorrow and disease and suffering and pain will end