



The Death of Death

Matthew 27:51-53

Sermon Outline

Three Symbolic Miracles as Jesus Died

1. The temple curtain was torn (51a)
2. The earth was torn open (51b)
3. Many graves were torn open (52-53)

Why this Seemingly Strange Group Resurrection?

1. There are a lot of unanswerable questions
2. There were resurrection-hints in the Old Testament
3. There was a resurrection-hint in Jesus' Ministry
4. Jesus' death and resurrection change everything
5. A spiritual resurrection is what we need to see and believe
6. One day we will all be raised

Discussion 1: The Atonement in History

It is so easy in our culture to be a nominal (in name only) Christian. We can, without fear of humiliation, give general assent to a set of beliefs and claim any label for ourselves. To do this we simply compartmentalize our lives... *these* are my religious beliefs and *these* are my real (though we never say it that way) beliefs. The double minded man is unstable in all his ways... so let's stop playing games. Either God really did come and walk among men or he didn't. If he came, he had a purpose or he didn't.... What really happened, and so what?

– *What is the significance of the atonement for humanity in general?*

[A healthy biblical view of human history has two monumental moments: the Fall and the Atonement. Everything else is just so much re-arranging of the furniture. If you see history this way, do the quaking earth and difficult to explain resurrections start to make sense? Do you see the Fall for the unfathomable disaster that it was? If not, how can you see the Atonement in all its searing glory?]

Discussion 2: Christ's Death

Christians are often quick to mention that “Jesus Christ died for your sins.” Unfortunately if comes across as foolishness to the world who usually just grins and says... “that’s nice... have a nice day” or the more honest and engaged might ask “why would he do a silly thing like that?”

- *Why did Christ have to die?* (what did it accomplish?)

[It is important that Christians be able to articulate the gospel clearly and concisely. It must start with the bad news that makes the good news make sense. Leaders--take mental inventory of the ability of those in your CG who are and are not able to do so. Let us resolve to equip them!]

- *What do the following verses have to do with the bad/good news?*

Hebrews 6:19-20 *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf...*

Hebrews 9:11-12 *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 10:19-22 *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...*

[Why were we separate from God and He so unapproachable? What is a priest? (bridge-builder... one who represents the people to God...). Understand the book of Hebrews as demonstrating the supremacy of Christ’s Priesthood...]

- *What is the significance of the curtain being torn in two?*

[Paul also refers to the Gospel as “the message of reconciliation” ... the need for reconciliation implies a broken relationship...]

Discussion 3: Christ’s Resurrection... Essential?

More and more these days, teachers are willing to compromise central teachings of the faith to either make the message more palatable for the world or to allow for “unity.”

- *Why is Christ’s resurrection an essential?*

[Was his death enough?... To satisfy justice perhaps, but to demonstrate his authority over death, his victory over death... that death does not have the final victory... Besides, in John 2 he claimed he would raise himself, so if he hadn’t, what would the death of a false prophet accomplish? ...]

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

– *Should a 21st century person really believe in a future resurrection?*

- Is Christ a credible authority on death?

[Demonstrated authority over it multiple times, including prophesying and accomplishing his own resurrection.]

- Is the testimony of Scripture and the martyrs credible about Christ?

[So much to be said here... Perhaps start with the martyrdom of the disciples. Yes, many are willing to die for what they believe (demonstrates sincerity), but who is willing to die for something they know is a lie? The disciples died not just for what they believed, but for their testimonies (what they saw and testified to). No one would die for what they knew to be false.]

Discussion 4: Pray for those who heard the Gospel

Please take some time to pray for the many who visited churches for Easter and heard the gospel. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work powerfully through the Word faithfully preached in our churches.

Father glorify Yourself and show Yourself strong to draw them to Yourself. May the good seed of the Word planted in them germinate by the power of Your Spirit. Give no sleep to their eyes until they cry out in repentance and belief. ... Amen.



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