

Resurrection Heresies

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Date: 29 February 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hello there. Welcome to the Providence Podcast. My name is Chris Oswald, Senior Pastor at Providence Community Church.

Today I'm going to talk a little bit about resurrection heresies. This is a subject that was brought up two weeks ago during a sermon, a sermon from 2 Timothy 2, verses 8-19.

And I had a whole bunch of content prepared that didn't make it into the sermon related to resurrection heresies, and I thought we would get into that today. Well, first of all, let me go ahead and just read the text just as a reminder because I'll refer back to the text throughout this particular podcast.

So I'm in 2 Timothy 2, and I'm going to read from verse 8-19. Remind them, verse 14.

Remind them of these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 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.

[1 : 5 6] But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened.

They are upsetting the faith of some, but God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal. The Lord knows who are His, and let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

Now, I wanted to talk about resurrection heresies because early on in the very first century of the church, we see recorded in Scripture at least two times in which churches are potentially being led astray through resurrection heresies, and that the resurrection heresies themselves are different, meaning it wasn't just one false teaching about the resurrection that was prominent, but we know of at least two separate teachings related to the resurrection, both of which were false and both of which were having a negative effect on the church.

We see the one mentioned here in 2 Timothy 2, verse 17, And if you'll remember, I mentioned that the word upsetting there is really overturning.

It's the word used to describe Jesus overturning the tables in the temple. So here is a resurrection heresy, that the resurrection has already happened. And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we have another resurrection heresy plaguing that particular church, not that the resurrection has already happened, but that there is no resurrection.

[3 : 4 4] So this is interesting. You've got at least two different kinds of heresies centered on the resurrection that have tremendous negative impact on the local church.

Let's talk about resurrection just generally for a minute. You see the theme of resurrection appear quite often in 2 Timothy. In verse 8, we see where he says, Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

In verse 11, This saying is trustworthy, for if we've died with him, we will also live with him. In verse 17, Who say that the resurrection has already happened?

Sorry, that's verse 18, isn't it? Yeah, it's verse 18. So let's talk about the resurrection just broadly for a minute. There are three interrelated resurrection concepts within Christianity.

First, there is the resurrection of Jesus. And this is reflected really clearly in verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Secondly, now, I might be wrong about the text location on this one.

[4 : 53] But secondly, another idea, another resurrection idea within Christianity is the spiritual resurrection of those he saves. He raises us from our death and sin and trespasses into new life in him.

I think that's reflected in verse 11, where it says, If we have died with him, we will also live with him. I could be wrong about that, but you know what I'm saying is correct biblically.

That is, that there's a spiritual resurrection that is conversion. And then third, a third resurrection concept in the New Testament is the physical resurrection of all who had previously died at the end of the age.

So this is like the eschatological resurrection. And this is different, different Christians with different eschatologies vary on some of the timing details.

But all agree that there will be a physical resurrection of all living human beings who have ever lived. And they will face judgment. Okay. And that's reflected in verses 12 through 13, which is sort of end of the age kind of stuff.

[6 : 02] And again, in verses 16 through 18. So you've got these three resurrection concepts, the resurrection of Jesus. You've got salvation resurrection raised from our spiritual death.

And then you've got physical eschatological resurrection, the thing that happens at the end of the age. And these three concepts, you know, are interrelated, obviously.

And sometimes there are texts that just like weave them together. I was thinking of Romans 6, 10 through 11. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, also through his spirit, which dwells in you.

So, yeah. So there's these three concepts. Now, I'm going to try to assign some particular meaning to each of these concepts. And I don't mean to say that these are the exclusive ideas behind these.

[7 : 08] But just generally, as we read the Bible, we see some ideas emerge related to each of these. Often, when we're talking about the resurrection of Christ, that has something to do with the power of God and the power of Christ.

This is sort of the, the resurrection is sort of the ultimate example of God's spiritual triumph over the physical realm. So a lot of times when you read about the resurrection of Jesus, there will be some reference to power.

Ephesians 1, 19 and 20. Paul is, I'm interrupting and I'm getting in the middle of a sentence here, but just for the sake of brevity. In Ephesians 1, 19, Paul says, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places.

So a lot of times when we see the resurrection of Jesus, we were pointed toward power. A second concept that we are pointed to with all of these resurrection concepts is a pattern.

By pattern, I mean the resurrection, the death and resurrection concept is the pattern for the Christian life. This is how we live. We are like seeds.

- [8 : 30] We fall to the ground and die and we bear much fruit. So we've got the power of God. We've got a pattern for Christian living inherent in the resurrection. And then also there is the great promise at work in the eschatological resurrection that all of this is leading to triumph for the believer and quite frankly, tragedy for the unbeliever.
- And so these are the three things you get at least from resurrection talk in the New Testament. You get power, a pattern and a promise. Now, those are big things, obviously.
- And so you can see why if you were to mess up any of the resurrection doctrines, if you were to pervert them, twist them, you could really mess up a Christian.
- You know, that's when Paul is saying in 2 Timothy 2 that this false teaching about the resurrection is overturning the faith of some. Well, we can see why.
- We need all three of those things. We need the power of God. We need to be mindful of the power of God. We need the pattern. We need to know how we're supposed to live. We're supposed to pick up our cross and deny ourselves and follow Jesus and not love our lives but let our lives fall down like seeds to die.
- [9 : 46] So we need the pattern. And then we need the promise. We need to know that we're laboring toward an eternal harvest in which we will be with God who's at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- So power, pattern, promise. Those are at least three of the main virtues that come from a proper understanding of resurrection theology. And if you start fiddling with that stuff, if you're the devil, it's a pretty attractive target because these are such essential things in the Christian life.
- So it's not surprising just from the perspective of spiritual warfare that early on in Christianity there were alternatives to the biblical theology of resurrection.
- So let's talk now about, as I mentioned in the sermon, we really can't know what the specifics of the resurrection heresies were.
- But let's go back to those three resurrections and just talk about some of the heresies because there's heresies related to all three. Okay. And let's just talk about how this would affect us.
- [11 : 01] So let's take the resurrection of Jesus. The main heresy that I see related to the resurrection of Jesus is to make it less than historical.
- Meaning to imply that it didn't really happen or to imply that it's just a nice idea or so on and so forth. If you can convince people that the resurrection of Jesus is not a historical event, one of the things you've done is you've really put materialism on top of the people.
- Now, by materialism, I don't mean the love of money. I mean a view of the world that sort of excludes supernatural power or supernatural intervention.
- It's essentially the default position of atheism is materialism. We're in a closed system. There are no external inputs to the system. So if you can deny the historical resurrection of Jesus, you lose power.
- You lose this idea that God intervenes in the world, that God has intervened in a marvelous way in the world. What happens if you screw up the spiritual resurrection?
- [12 : 16] Well, I think the way you fiddle with Jesus' resurrection is you make it less than historical. And I think the way you fiddle with the resurrection as salvation concept is to make it less than literal.
- And I think this is where we get Arminianism. So Ephesians 2 is pretty clear that we were dead in our sins and trespasses and then God raised us up, right? And it was through grace and not by works that he did this.
- Well, the way to fiddle with that one is to say, well, we weren't really dead. We weren't really dead in our sins and trespasses. Like, that's just metaphoric language.

We were actually, you know, still capable of processing spiritual information. We were still capable of making a choice for Christ. And so the Arminian, who believes that salvation is a partnership arrangement between man and God, the Arminian denies the literalness of the Ephesians 2 presentation of salvation as being the resurrection.

So you deny the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection. You kind of wind up with a powerless, materialistic, closed system kind of perspective. You deny the reality of a spiritual resurrection that we really were literally dead in our sins and trespasses and that God raised us up.

[13 : 38] When you deny that, you get Arminianism. The classic way to explain this. And, you know, as I get older, it's funny because things I thought I came up with wind up being really clear that I didn't come up with them and that I probably just read them when I was younger and just didn't remember.

Because now I'm kind of going back through stuff, you know, in this fourth decade, the end of the fourth decade of starting to read stuff. I'm like, oh, I didn't come up with that. That was somebody else.

So the thing I thought I came up with, but it turns out I didn't, is this idea that differentiates Calvinism from Arminianism. And that is the way that I've always explained it is Arminianism presents us as being as drowning in a lake of sin.

And we're in trouble, to be sure. But at just the right time, Jesus rose out in the redemptive rowboat and he throws us a line. And we, in our own choosing, grab hold of that rope.

We respond in our own choosing to the gospel offer. And we are towed back in. Maybe we help climb in the boat a little bit. And we're rescued from our sin.

[14 : 51] And then the Calvinist perspective, which is just so much more literally attached to the way that Ephesians 2 describes it, is that, no, we weren't drowning in the lake of sin. We were dead in the lake of sin.

Jesus came, pulled us out of the water, brought us into the boat, and breathed life into us. And so the first thing we noticed about the situation is, you know, Jesus standing over us, giving us life.

So when you deny that there really is a literal spiritual resurrection that happens at salvation, you wind up with Arminianism. And then what happens when you deny, how do we fiddle with and mess up the future resurrection?

You know, we've talked about the first two. How do we mess up the future resurrection? Well, when we start talking about the future resurrection as less than physical, then we wind up with what you might describe as Gnosticism or Pietism or Spiritualism.

See, it's very important. It's very important for the whole system of Christianity that we understand that one day God will give every human being a new body prepared for their eternal future.

[16 : 03] Those condemned to hell will receive a body prepared for their torment. And those given new life in Christ without any of their own merit through grace, they will receive a body prepared for eternal celebration and jubilation in Christ.

The key word being physical. So we've got to understand that God has a commitment to physicality and a commitment to this earth in particular, a commitment to what will in the future be described, is described as the new heavens and the new earth.

And so one of the ways we stay attached to this idea of our incorporeal, our corporeal, like our embodiment, one of the ways we stay attached to the idea of God's commitment to matter, for instance, and physicality, and that we don't, you know, just say that our health doesn't matter or, you know, our home doesn't matter and so on and so forth.

How do we theologically stay connected to the importance of physicality without it sort of overrunning us and it being the only thing? See, the doctrine of the last resurrection is, that's one of the ways you do that.

Because you see that God has a physical future, a physical eternal future planned for all people. And so you mess with the resurrection of Jesus and you make it less than historical, you get materialism.

[17 : 24] You mess with the spiritual resurrection of the salvation of the saints and you wind up with Arminianism. And then you mess with the future resurrection and you wind up with Gnosticism, this view of sort of immateriality.

And all the things that are really important are just spiritual and not physical in any respect. So that's all I had to share. I just wanted to show you why this doctrine winds up being so crucial, so crucial to warrant the enemy's attack.

And the way that you stay clear of all the various heresies is, number one, you have a certainty about the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. And that will convey itself to you in some respects in a sense of God's power.

Number two, you have a clear sense that your salvation was really from death into life. And that those passages are being quite literal. You really were spiritually dead and then you're brought to life.

And then number three, you make sure you have a sense that the future is physical. The eternal future is physical. We will live in a new heavens and a new earth.

[18 : 33] We will play sports. We will work. We will worship. So on and so forth. We will do human things in the presence of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

If you keep those three things pegged and don't let anybody fiddle with them, you're going to steer clear of a lot of heresy and a lot of discouragement.

And you're really going to be primed with the basic theological architecture necessary to live a good life for the glory of God. All right. Well, that's all I've got about the resurrection. And I hope that this was encouraging or thought-provoking to you.

Be well. May the Lord bless you this week. In Jesus' name. Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye.