

Title:            **THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

Text:            John 5:25

Subject:        *Regeneration*

Date:            Sunday Morning — February 8, 2009

Tape:            John #41

Reading:        *Ephesians 1:3-2:10*

Introduction:

My subject is **The First Resurrection**. God the Holy Spirit declares in Revelation 20:6, — “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.*” Oh, how I pray that the God of all grace will cause you to have part in this first resurrection. We read about it earlier in Ephesians 1 and 2. The first resurrection is the new birth. Most people vainly imagine that salvation is...

- A Movement of the Body!
- A Choice of the Will!
- Assent to a Proposition!
- A Decision not to Go to Hell!
- Amen to a Prayer!
- A Religious Ritual!

No, no, no, no, a thousand times no! Salvation is nothing less than the resurrection of our souls, a resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life. It is a resurrection to life accomplished in us by the omnipotent mercy, effectual grace and irresistible call of God our Savior. Turn with me to John 5:25, and I will show you.

(John 5:25) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

### **THE CONDITION OF THE SINNER**

There are three things in this text that I want you to see. First, our Savior here speaks about the condition of every sinner. Every child of Adam is born “*dead*,” spiritually dead, “*dead in trespasses and in sins.*”

(Ephesians 2:1-5) “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the

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air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).”

(Colossians 2:12-13) “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Fallen man is not sick, wounded, or unconscious. He is dead. He is spiritually dead, incapable of motion, feeling, work, or even response. He is dead!

- He does not need revival. He needs life!
- He does not need reforming. He needs life!
- He does not need help. He needs life!
- He does not need religion. He needs life!

What is this spiritual death? Death is separation. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. You all know what it is for the body to be dead physically. That body lying on that hard, cold slab in the morgue, waiting to be embalmed is dead. The soul has departed, and has left the body insensible and incapable of preserving itself. The soul was like salt to the body. As soon as the soul is gone, the body begins to decay and return to the dust. Very soon it putrefies and becomes utterly obnoxious. Who wants to look upon a dead body, after it has been in the grave for even a short time?

Spiritual death, is the separation of the soul from God. In Genesis 2:17 the Lord God told Adam that in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he would “*surely die.*” But, when Adam ate of the fruit, he did not die physically. His physical death did not occur until hundreds of years later. The Lord must have had something else in mind, when he said, “*In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die!*” He did indeed. He was referring to spiritual death, for “*in Adam all die!*”

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(Romans 5:12) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

This spiritual death, this separation from God is exactly what we see in Genesis 3:8. When Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord, they “*hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God.*” The fellowship had been broken. They were spiritually dead. God and man were separated by sin. A wall of death stood between the fallen pair and God their Maker.

When hanging on the cross as our Substitute, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, the Lord Jesus was forsaken of God, separated from God in death, when he was made sin for us! Though he is himself our God, when he was made sin, he suffered the consequence of our guilt that he made his own, and cried in agony no man can comprehend, “*My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Mark 15:33-34).

Man without Christ is spiritually dead. Paul describes it as “*being alienated from the life of God*” in Ephesians 4:18. Fallen man, like Adam in the garden, hiding from God, is isolated from God. He hides from God, hides from his presence, and hides from his voice (Genesis 3:8-10).

(Genesis 3:8-10) “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. (9) And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? (10) And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.”

**The dead have none of the senses of the living.** The dead cannot hear, or see, or feel, or taste, or smell. Those who are dead cannot...

- Hear the gospel.
- See the kingdom of God.
- Feel the Savior’s love.
- Taste the sweet morsels of his grace.
- Smell the sweet fragrance of his sacrifice.

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**Fallen man is dead!** Pity him. He is dead! — Dead to all things spiritual! — Dead to all things Divine! — Dead to all things eternal! — Dead to holiness! — Dead to truth! — Dead to all his soul's needs!

In the new birth, in the first resurrection, this spiritual death is reversed. The dead hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear his voice live, live by the power of that voice!

We were spiritually dead, incapable of saving ourselves, incapable of even perceiving, let alone receiving eternal life, incapable of even knowing our need of life, until the Lord Jesus came and gave us life by his almighty grace (Titus 3:5-7; Ezekiel 16:6-8; 37:1-14).

(Titus 3:5-7) “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

(Ezekiel 16:6-8) “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live. (7) I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare. (8) Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.”

(Ezekiel 37:1-14) “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones, (2) And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry. (3) And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. (4) Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the

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LORD. (5) Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: (6) And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. (7) So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. (8) And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. (9) Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. (10) So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. (11) Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. (12) Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. (13) And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, (14) And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.”

The book of Revelation speaks of the “*second death*” (Revelation 2:11; 21:8) the final, everlasting, conscious separation of lost sinners from God. Only those who have never experienced new life in Christ will partake of the second death (Revelation 20:6).

(Revelation 20:6) “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

**THE COMMAND OF THE SAVIOR**

But, blessed be God, there is hope for the dead. Hear our Savior’s words...

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(John 5:25) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

There is hope, not in the dead, but for the dead. Hope is found in the command (not invitation, not offer — command) of the Savior. Our Lord Jesus declares, “*the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.*” He initiates the call, not the preacher, or the parent, or the personal worker. The God who said “*Let there be light*” also says “*Let there be Life*” and there is Life. When He speaks, it is done.

**What power there is in the voice of the Son of God!** In the picture of our risen and glorified Lord, drawn by the pen of inspiration in the first chapter of the Revelation, after speaking of his incomparable figure, glowing and shining above the brightness of the sun, John says, “*Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.*” In Hebrews 4, we read...

(Hebrews 4:12-13) “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

Christ’s voice, the voice of him who is the Word of God, is an omnipotent, life-giving voice.

- It was his voice that said to the paralyzed man (Mark 2:1-12, — “*Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way!*”
- When the centurion of Capernaum sought him out and said to Him, “My servant is sick. Just speak the word and he’ll be healed.” The Lord said, “No, I’ll go with you and lay my hands upon the servant.” The centurion said, “That’s not necessary, — not at all. You just speak — you just say the word and my servant will be healed” —The all-powerful, omnipotent voice of Christ healed the centurion’s servant.
- “*Ephphatha,*” he said in Decapolis, and the deaf and the dumb could hear and speak.
- “*Talitha cumi,*” he said to the daughter of Jairus, and the young maiden awakened alike from the dead.

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- He stopped the funeral procession in Nain, as the poor widow was going out to bury her son; and, speaking to the young man on the bier, he brought the dead to life.
- He simply spoke the words, “Lazarus, Come forth,” and, Lazarus, bound in his grave clothes, stepped out of the sepulcher full of life. The omnipotent, all-powerful voice of the Son of God will be heard and the very dead shall come to life.

“*The hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.*” — Our Lord Jesus Christ is in Scripture, especially in the Gospel of John, called “*the Word.*” Here his voice is spoken of, but what is a voice apart from the person that utters it? What is the Word he speaks by which dead men are brought to life? Is not Jesus Christ himself the Word of God to man? The distinct, articulate manifestation of Deity is Jesus Christ.

(John 1:18) “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him.*”

**Behold the Christ of God and hear his voice!**

- In the Incarnation (John 1:14)
- In His Life of Obedience (Jeremiah 23:6)
- In His Sin-atoning Sacrifice (Romans 8:1)
- In His Triumphant Resurrection (Colossians 2:15)
- In His Glorious Ascension (Psalm 68:19-20)
- In His Heavenly Intercession (Romans 8:32-39)

Look at our text again. — “*The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear.*” I have told you what they will hear, they will hear the Word; but who will speak it? Who is it that alone can speak it with life-giving power? — “*When the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, they that hear shall live.*” — Whenever any dead soul is made to live, it is through the Word, but it is not through the voice of the preacher. Preachers are instruments, nothing more. The voice that makes dead souls live is the voice of Christ Jesus. And the voice of the Son of God, by which the Word of God comes in life-giving, omnipotent, irresistible power is God the Holy Spirit.

(John 6:63) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they are spirit, and they are life.*”

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The gospel I preach to you must come home to your heart and your conscience, and be applied by God the Holy Ghost. It is through the Holy Spirit that the voice of Christ is heard in the soul.

What, then, can we do with sinners, if we cannot make them hear? We can pull our Master's sleeves, and say to him, "Blessed Lord Jesus, speak the word, speak the word!" When I come into this pulpit the prayer that rises to my heart always — I hope I can say without guile always — is this, "Lord Jesus, speak your Word to the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners through this worthless, empty, dirty, broken pipe!"

"Oh! let the dead now hear thy voice,  
Bid, Lord, thy banished ones rejoice;  
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,  
Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness."

It is by this means that lost, ruined, helpless, dead sinners are made to live (1 Peter 1:18-25).

(1 Peter 1:18-25) "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (21) Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (22) Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: (23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

## **THE CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS**



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Look at our text again, and be sure you do not miss this third thing. Our Lord Jesus here assures us of the certainty of his success in causing the dead to hear his voice.

(John 5:25) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

“*They that hear shall live!*” What a good word that word “*shall*” is! It is a declaration of absolute certainty. When the Lord speaks to the dead sinner, the dead comes to life by the force of irresistible omnipotence! He does not woo or entice the dead. He draws him to himself by sovereign power, and the dead are made to live. **The fruit of this life that the Son of God gives is conviction.**

(John 16:8-11) “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

### **The fruit of this life that the Son of God gives is faith.**

(John 3:36) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

### **The fruit of this life that the Son of God gives is Repentance.**

(1 Thessalonians 1:4-10) “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (6) And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: (7) So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. (8) For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. (9) For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you,

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and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; (10) And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

Oh, may the God of all grace cause you to hear his voice and live! This is the first resurrection. — *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

Amen.