

Luke 20:27-21:4

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[0 : 0 0] Luke 20 verse 20 to 21 verse 4. And if I had a sermon title, which I don't, I don't like! I'd put this on putting Jesus in his place. Putting Jesus in his place. And for two reasons and why I think that's important. Because number one, that's what the religious leaders were trying to do. Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem. He'd been acclaimed the Messiah. He'd been gone into the temple. He'd cleansed the temple. And he was preaching the gospel. The good news. And the religious leaders wanted to kill him. They wanted to put him in his place, which was a hole in the ground. Secondly, God wanted to put him in his place. And the place where God wanted to put the Lord Jesus was to raise him from the dead. And to place him at the highest place above every name. And above every dominion and every power and every authority.

authority at his right hand. God wanted to put the Lord Jesus in his place, the place of honour. And it's very interesting to me that here we are in Luke's gospel within days of his execution. But Jesus has resurrection on his mind. And there are two big points in this passage. And then two points of application. Two concrete, real life examples of the difference that the resurrection makes now, today. You know the signs you sometimes see outside churches.

There used to be one outside at Elam Pentecostal Church in Swansea. And it would have a different sign outside the church every week. And one of the signs said this, free trip to heaven inside.

You know, outside the church building. You know, written in kind of luminous writing. Outside. Free trip to heaven outside. Now I think, a lot of people think that's what Christianity is all about. But it's for people a little bit weak in the mind. As if we can't really face reality. And so what we do is we go to church and we have this kind of heaven thing going on.

It's a crutch that helps us get through. And so what we use, this idea of heaven is a kind of escapism. We're people of the future but we're not really much use in this world.

[2 : 2 2] And this passage in Luke chapter 20 is full of the resurrection. And I've got to say to you, it is going to be hard work. So let me warn you, if you've left your brain at the door, go and get it. And we'll wait for you. What I want you to see is I want you to see how dangerously practical the resurrection is. So here are the two main points. The first one in verses 27 to verse 40 I call taking the life out of the resurrection. Taking the life out of the resurrection. I was going to call it taking the fun out of the resurrection.

Because in 27 you meet the Sadducees for the first time in Luke's gospel. And you all know the old joke, don't you know what the Sadducees is. They didn't believe in the resurrection. And the old joke was they didn't believe in the resurrection. And that is why they were sad you see. It's not my joke. But what these people were is they were the creme de la creme of the Jewish elite. They were part of the authority structure of Jerusalem. They were the wealthy aristocratic. And their clientele was the wealthiest. They had their hearts and their minds fixed solidly on this life, on this world and all the goodies you could get in it.

They didn't believe in heaven. They didn't believe in angels. And they thought the idea of the resurrection was absolute nonsense. And they created a religion which was limited and defined by their own imagination. And the spirit of the Sadducees is alive and well today.

You see in people who call themselves church followers, who call themselves spiritual, but they only live for now. And they're only concerned about the now. And they're only concerned about the sufferings of the world now. And they live for today. And the future doesn't concern me, isn't it? Do you remember the Christian aid advert? I believe in life before death. Of course we believe in that. And yet what that displayed was a horrific misunderstanding of the Christian gospel. Those who limit the Christian faith to what they can see or what they can imagine.

And so they're embarrassed about certain parts of the Bible and so they just slice them off. The nasty bits about judgment. The nasty bits about the cross and Christ bearing our sin on the cross and sexual immorality. Sexual morality. And so they modify the faith so it doesn't upset them and it doesn't accept their clientele in society. And one of the funny things is when you do that is actually God becomes very much like you. And his interests are your interests. And God is no longer able to challenge you or really change you. Instead from time to time he comforts you that your opinions are right. And that is the saddest. Can you see their arrogance? They drip with pride as they come to the Lord Jesus.

[5 : 21] And they ridicule the resurrection verses 28 to 33. They cheek up this Old Testament principle. Where sometimes in some circumstances if the guy married a woman and then died his brothers could marry the widow.

It's a very gracious law. The brother could marry the widow to raise up the children in his name. And so they put to Jesus the famous story of the seven unlucky brothers.

Who all felt obliged to marry the same widow. The first brother died. And the second brother died. And the third brother died. And I suspect by the time they got to the fourth brother they had great suspicions over this widow didn't they? What was she cooking?

Now I would say the story of Jesus about this silly resurrection business Jesus. What about if these seven brothers they die and then they wake up in heaven? Who will they be married to?

And you can see their smile won't they? Can't you? They think they've knocked out. They think they've given the killer blow. To this silly idea of the resurrection. And Jesus, just see how patient he is with them.

[6 : 34] They are talking to the one who came from heaven. They are talking to the one who is going back to heaven. Who has the power of life and death in his hands. And although they are trying to kill him and humiliate him.

What he does is he just opens the door. For them to see the true nature of the resurrection. They are playing a very dangerous game aren't they? They come with their two pence question to the Lord Jesus.

And he gives them a two billion pound answer. And I want to warn you. As we read these words in church. We read these words that are like thunderclaps to us spiritually.

And it is hard to realise the consummate authority. Just how utterly relaxed Jesus is. And the ease with Jesus talks about God and heaven.

And the resurrection. And who's there and who is not. And what life would be like. Let me read you just a couple of verses. Verse 34. And they are just remarkable words.

[7 : 35] Jesus said to them. Sons of this age marry. And are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age. And to the resurrection from the dead.

Neither marry nor are given in marriage. They cannot die anymore. Because they are equal to angels. And are sons of God being sons of the resurrection. Jesus divides history.

He divides reality into two. He says there is this age. And there is the age to come. There is this world. And there is the world to come.

And the problem he said is you Pharisees. Because you are in love with this age. Because you are in love with this world. Your view of the resurrection is completely wrong. It's completely upside down.

Because the resurrection opens the door to a different world. To a different life. To a different kind of existence. And the Sadducees are trying to rubbish the resurrection.

[8 : 37] With a marriage analogy. But Jesus says their mistake. Is that they think that the next life. Is just the continuation of this life. For centuries and centuries.

Just a couple of modifications. Just a couple of improvements. And the point that Jesus is making. Is there is radical discontinuity. There is radical discontinuity. Between the resurrection life.

And our life here. The whole system of life. Is radically different in the resurrection. He says those that attain to the resurrection. Cannot die anymore.

They are in that sense equal to angels. Transformed by the deathless life of God. We will be given. The gift of immortality. You know the idea of the immortality of the soul.

That is a Greek idea. It's not a Bible idea. You and I do not have immortality. It is a gift that God gives those. Who he raises from the dead.

[9 : 38] And of course there will be continuity. But there will also be radical discontinuity. And that is what Jesus wants to emphasize here. That if you take a seed.

You put the seed in your hand. You cannot tell the beauty of the flower. Or the fragrance of the flower from that seed. Or perhaps let's say there is a baby born this week.

And in a few years time. They will be swimming in the sea. And they will be playing football. And they will be enjoying the weather. But if we asked that newborn baby born this week.

Just two months ago. While it was still in the womb. To explain to us the sunset. Or the seaside. It would have never been able to with it.

But now it's been born. Those things are different. And it's a little bit the same. When you ask the question. What becomes of marriage? What becomes of my marriage? What becomes of our marriage in the resurrection?

[10 : 35] Jesus is saying this. You do not have the capacity to understand it. But some translators say that there will be no marriage in heaven. I'm not sure.

I don't know about that. I don't think that is what Jesus is saying here. I think he's saying. Is that life in heaven is significantly different.

But here is the point. Look at verse 35. Who is going to be raised? Who is going to be raised?

Those who are counted worthy. Do you notice that? It's not those who think themselves worthy.

It's not those who are trying to make themselves worthy. It says it is those who God says are worthy. And we know from Luke's gospel. From going through it. That the people who God counts as worthy.

Are those who say. Lord. I am not worthy. Have mercy on me. A sinner. And then in verse 37 and 38. Jesus turns to the Sadducees.

[11 : 36] And says. If you read your Bible boys. You'd know better. If you'd read your Bible. You would know the truth of the resurrection. And he takes them back to that day.

Doesn't he? In the Old Testament. When God appeared in the burning bush. You know when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. And he said. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Have been dead for centuries.

Hundreds of years. And yet when God appears. He says. I am the God of Abraham. And I am the God of Isaac. And I am the God of Jacob.

Not I was the God. Not I used to be the God. They may be dead and gone. But to me they are very much alive. What Jesus is saying.

Is true biblical faith. Is resurrection faith. All the Old Testament patriarchs. Had resurrection faith. They all believed in the God who could raise.

[12 : 37] The God who could bring life. Out of death. They all looked to a greater city. To a heavenly country. And we are constantly bombarded.

With the propaganda of the Sadducees. Even today. Nearly every movie. And every contemporary song. That speaks about heaven. Does the savagely thing.

And it limits it to our imagination. Even Christians do it. Someone was telling me. They had been to the Billy Graham Center. In Wheaton College.

Illinois. And it was a great. Kind of showing a record. Of how many people he had reached. And all the different ways. That he had been used. To reach many people with the gospel. And it was a really great day. But at the top.

On the fourth floor. You can go into the heavenly. Heaven room. And you go through a corridor. And there are white doors. And you open the door.

[13 : 34] Into the heaven room. And there are four blank walls. Painted with clouds. And the hallelujah chorus loops. Around and around. And around. And that's all that's in there.

Well that was very very unhelpful. Isn't it? Because it takes the life. Out of the resurrection. And that is the first point.

The saddesties defined God. By their own imagination. And they took the life. Out of the resurrection. Well here's the second point. Putting the life. Back into the resurrection. Put the life. Back into the resurrection. It's verses 41 to 44.

And these are by far. The most important verses. In our chapter. Now let me introduce each of them. Them to you. If you look carefully. At verse 39. The scribes come in.

There's another group of people. It's not the saddesties. The scribes. And they say to Jesus. Bravo. Good one. We were right or wrong. Good one for sticking it.

[14:32] To the saddesties. And Jesus looks at them. And Jesus says. You can be completely orthodox. In the resurrection. You can say the creed proudly. And completely miss the point.

Because the point of the resurrection. Is not getting your theology. Laser accurate. The point of the resurrection. Is Jesus Christ himself. And if you think.

And I think this is very helpful for us. If you think of the resurrection. In terms of what is going to happen to you. And your happy life. After death. And Jesus does not feature large in it.

You've misunderstood. And so what Jesus does. In these verses 41 to 44. Is he takes them to Psalm 110. Which is probably one of the most important texts.

In all of the Bible. It's the one Old Testament text. That is quoted more than any other. In the New Testament. And so we need to spend a little bit of time there. So can you come back with me to Psalm 110. Psalm 110.

[15:32] I'll give you the page number. It is on page 508. Page 508. Let me read you the first verse.

The heading to the Psalm says. A Psalm of David. The Lord. Says to my Lord. Sit at my right hand. Until I make your enemies a footstool. How many people are there in verse 1? There are four people. But there are three very important ones. There is David the Psalm writer. The second is the Lord.

And if you look very closely. It is all in capital letters. Which is the name that the creative God revealed to Israel. This is the name of God Almighty.

This is his person. But there is a third character isn't there? The Lord says to my Lord. There is a second Lord in the first line. And this second Lord is the focus of the Psalm.

[16:34] And God the creator says to the second Lord. Now sit at my right hand. I've been throning you over the world. Until I put all your enemies under your feet.

Who is Jesus talking about? And when is Jesus talking about? Who is David talking about? And when is David talking about? Well the answer is David is talking about the Lord Jesus.

And when was he enthroned? Jesus was enthroned at the right hand of God. That was the day of the resurrection. And that is the point of the resurrection. Now let's go forward from Luke.

Okay? Let's go to Acts chapter 2. Can you do that? Acts chapter 2. Come on. Acts chapter 2. And it's on page 910. It's the first Christian sermon.

By the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. After the Holy Spirit has fallen. Has come upon them. Jesus has been raised 40 days before. And he touches on this in verse 24.

[17:36] Acts chapter 24. And then on to verse 32. Verse 32. We'll just read that. This Jesus. God raised up. And of that we are all witnesses.

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God. And having received from the Father. The promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured out this. That you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens.

But he himself says. The Lord says to my Lord. Sit at my right hand. Until I make your enemies. Your footstool. Here is the implication.

Here is the result. Verse 36. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain. That God has made him both Lord and Christ. This Jesus will be crucified. The point of the resurrection.

Is not that you and I get a happy life after death. The point of the resurrection. Is that God is making Jesus Lord and Christ. And enthroning him as Lord. Psalm 110. And on the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

[18:34] He was placed at the right hand of God. And he now rules all things. His rule is invisible. And yet what God has been doing. Since the morning of the resurrection. That first morning.

Until the day he comes again. Is he's been placing all of God's enemies. Under his feet. Including death itself. It's very important. That the resurrection is about Jesus Christ.

And our resurrection. Is part of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Our resurrection comes about. Simply because he has been placed. At the right hand of the father on high. And the way that we receive resurrection.

Is not by trying to be raised from the dead. It is by going to Christ. And it is by seeing Jesus Christ. And being in Christ. The one who is precious.

The one who is the head of the corner. The one who God has chosen of all things. You see sometimes. Christians talk about death in this way.

[19 : 31] Don't they? They say oh it's going to be great. It's going to be great to be reunited. With my uncle Bob. And auntie Mabel. And my favourite golden retriever. We'll have our glorious cottage in heaven.

Well part of that is true. But the real point of the resurrection. Is not just that the chains of death. Have been burst open. But who burst them?

It is Christ. Who burst them. And Jesus Christ is our resurrection. He is our life. He is our justification. He is our redemption.

He is our accident. And that has massive implications. For all sorts of things. One simple illustration. What is the greatest grief that worries you? What is the greatest anxiety that overpowers you? God is placing it under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the way that you deal with that difficulty. Is by going to him. And you ask him.

[20 : 30] And you approach him. And everything he promises he will perform. So let's go up this up and take it back to Luke 20. It is amazing. This is what Jesus had in mind.

Just a couple of days before he was crucified. Do you see it? Luke 20 verse 41. Go back there. Luke 20 verse 41. But he said to them. How can they say that Christ is David's son?

Now we know from Luke's gospel. That is a common refrain isn't it? Jesus Christ. Son of David. The angels announce it. Gabriel announces it.

Peter announces it. The blind man shouts it in Luke 18. But they have not seen the amazing fact. That the son of David is also God in the flesh. David's Lord of Psalm 110.

And the Sadducees are arguing the things of God with the son of God. And he doesn't crush them. He doesn't humiliate them. But he just opens the Bible very gently to them.

[21 : 31] And the great danger for them is their worldly religion. Which they've separated from the idea of the resurrection. Of Jesus. And if you separate resurrection from Jesus.

What have you got? You've got empty religion. That has got no power. That gives you no hope. And it's got no power to change you. And it can't turn us out to serve others.

What was it that so radicalised the early Christians in the book of Acts? Why did they risk their lives for the gospel? The Holy Spirit comes and fills them with power.

But what do they preach? Do they preach, I'm going to be raised from the dead. And I'm going to be with Uncle Bill and Auntie Mabel and the gold retriever in a cottage. And isn't it going to be wonderful? No. Do they preach, you can be raised from the dead.

And you can have life forever. It's so often what we preach. No, they preach Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. And what are you going to do about it? And from that position he offers you forgiveness.

[22 : 34] And life. And the spirit of the risen Christ rules over all things. And he will remake all things. Heaven and earth will be restored. And God is placing all things under his feet.

And that is the gospel. So the lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land. And nothing else I think in all the world can give us courage to face persecution.

Nothing in all the world can tear down your idols. Except seeing the beauty of the Lord Jesus. It is all a matter of where our treasure is, isn't it?

So I want to turn very quickly to two applications. Alright? And they are truly devastating. Two applications which show us what the resurrection means now.

And what is negative and what is positive. So firstly, let's do the negative. Verses 45 to 47. Which is a picture of religion without God in it. It's a picture of religion without life in it.

[23 : 43] He turns to his disciples and he says, verse 45. I beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes. And love greetings in the marketplaces. And the best seats in the synagogue. And the places of honour at feasts.

Who devour widows' houses. And for a pretense to make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation. This is religion on my terms. This is horizontal religion. It is a religion that does not care what God is doing.

And what God has said. And the kind of religion that wears its religiosity as a camouflage. But it's actually barefaced idolatry.

If you've been with us in Luke's gospel. The three things that we've seen. The idols in Luke's gospel keep coming back again and again and again. They are money. Human approval. And religion.

Money. Human approval. And religion. Just look at this religion. They invest in fashion. It's ecclesiastical fashion.

[24 : 45] But you know what they're doing. They love the places of honour. They are in love with their own status. And they devour widows' houses. What does that mean? They use religion to rip money off those who are kind and patient.

They trade on that gentleness. Because this is their other idol. Money. Religion. Approval of others. And money. And what is their religion like?

It is empty. And it is powerless. And it is very deceiving. And it is not the religion of the God of Abraham. The God of Isaac. And the God of Jacob. It is a religion which wants what God gives. But does not want God. And Jesus says. Doesn't he. At the end of verse 47. Can you see. It is a terrifying verse. Which I think is a theme in Luke's gospel.

That there are degrees of punishment. They will receive. What? Condemnation. Yes. But greed. To condemnation. And the son of God says.

[25 : 45] Because on the day of judgment. There will be degrees. And condemnation. And those who have lived a life. Of religious hypocrisy. And have used their religion. As a cover for greed.

And status. And all their idols. Will be judged. Most harshly. It is a terrifying phrase. And then he moves on.

To a beautiful illustration. The positive. Chapter 21. Verses 1 to 4. It is an extraordinary thing. It says. Here is a woman. She is poor. So she has no money.

She has no status. So she does not have the approval of others. She is weak. She is defenceless. And she has got something in her life.

That seems to be more important than money. And more important than their approval. What can it be? There she is in the temple. And she is in the line. A long line with the donors.

[26 : 42] Who are putting in their massive charity checks. And trying to squeeze them in. And get their wallets out. And pull out 50 pound notes. And put wads of cash in. So everyone can see them.

And everything about her is wrong. She's got the wrong clothing. Her gift is pathetic. She's got two copper coins. And Jesus says.

God loves it. God loves it. And God measures this totally differently to what we do. And God is not impressed.

God is not impressed with your money. God is not impressed with your speeches. God is not impressed with human approval. What matters to him is what is going on in the heart of this woman. In this act of sacrifice. I'm sure her financial advisors. Would have gone mad, wouldn't they? Keep one coin back at least. It is foolish.

[27 : 48] And it is crazy. But to God it is deeply, deeply precious. And Jesus says. All the big givers on that day. They did very, very little. They could easily afford their big gifts.

And what they kept back. Was just plenty for themselves. But in God's eyes. What this poor woman did. Was more than all the other people combined. Her two copper coins. And the reason they are more than all.

Is she gave out of her need. She gave. All of her life. Literally she gave all of her existence.

In that gift. So what on earth has the cure. The power to cure you from greed. What has the power to replace my stinginess.

With a sacrificial attitude. To take me and change me. From being a taker into a giver. And the answer Jesus says. Is nothing on this earth.

[28 : 46] It is only that he is seated. At the right hand of the father. And here is a woman. Who lives before God. Who is able to give her life to God.

Because she believes that God is the one. Who raises the dead. She gives all that she has. She gives her life. Because God is the one.

Who raises from the dead. And that is very important. The only way that she can be a generous person. Is by giving her whole life to God. And the only way she can give her whole life to God. Is she knows. That God has the power of resurrection.

In his hands. And it is only the resurrection. That has the power to loosen the strangle holes. That your idols have on you. And my idols have on me.

It is only when we are convinced. That our true treasure is in heaven. That our treasure here. Loosens its grip on us. It is only when we understand.

[29 : 44] That we are loved. By God the father. And by his one and only son. Who is seated at God's right hand. And is risen from the dead. That it doesn't really matter. When we have the approval of others.

It is a stunning example. Of true life. And true faith. And I think giving financially. Giving sacrificially. And financially. Is like dying. And the only way we can enter. Into that death. Is through faith. In the God of resurrection power. It is only when we come to see. That God has placed Jesus. At the highest place. That we are free to do that. And if this poor woman. Could do that. On that day. You and I have got far more reason. Haven't we? Because this is pre-resurrection. And yet you and I have seen Jesus. Raised from the dead. Appearing to many. Taken up to heaven. Seated at the right hand of power. Far above all rule and authority. [30 : 46] In this age. And in the age to come. Let's pray.