

# Jesus the Resurrection and Life

by John Nelson Darby

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*Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and His presence gives believers spiritual life, liberty, and eternal life, ultimately triumphing over Satan's power.*

**Scripture:** John 11:25

**Topics:** "Resurrection", "Victory over Death"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, showcasing His power over death and the deceit of Satan. He explains how Satan's influence leads to death through sin, but Christ's presence and sacrifice provide eternal life and victory over death. Darby illustrates this through the story of Lazarus, where Jesus demonstrates His authority by raising him from the dead, affirming that those who believe in Him will never truly die. The sermon calls believers to recognize the life-giving power of Christ and to live in anticipation of His return, when all will be made new. Ultimately, Darby encourages the faithful to find comfort and strength in the truth that Jesus is the source of life and resurrection.

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## Transcript

JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

JOHN 11 : 25

THIS chapter presents in the most striking manner the perfect sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the trials and vicissitudes of His people, even in the sufferings which death brings, and displays the Lord's power and love conspicuous over death. It shews us what the energy, the utmost energy, of evil can do over those who are even the beloved of the Lord ; but it also shews us how the Lord Jesus sets it altogether aside in the energy and in the strength of His own power.

We have here the full result of Satan's power, and the perfect triumphing of the Lord over that power. Death is the result of the power of Satan. By bringing in sin, he brought in death : " the wages of sin is death " ; this is the utmost of Satan's power. He brought in this at the commencement, he brought it in by deceit ; for " he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." Such has he been ever since; he is called the old serpent and the deceiver ; and having deceived, he became the murderer of the first Adam, and, in one sense, of the second Adam. He was and is a liar : that is his character, as exactly opposed to Christ, who is the truth. In like manner all the variations of his character are set in opposition to that of Christ : he is the destroyer, and Christ is the giver of life ; he is the accuser of the brethren, and

Christ the Mediator for them ; Christ the truth of God, and Satan the father of lies. In this character he is first brought before us. By misrepresenting the truth and character of God, he became the murderer of the souls of men, and brought in death-this was his power. Christ came to destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. The devil murdered souls by falsifying the truth of God. Here we learn his subtlety-presenting falsehood and death through the medium of the truth of God in part ; and thus, from being a liar, he becomes a murderer.

Men are not aware of the depths of deceit practised by Satan his plan is not to bring forward at once a broad intelligible falsehood, which carries the lie on the very face of it. Not so, brethren ; he puts it forward under the guise of truth, in the form of truth, and in some sense mixed up with the truth. It was in this way he deceived Adam; he wanted him to eat the fruit which God had forbidden him; and how does he proceed ? He says indeed, " Ye shall not surely die! " Now there was a palpable untruth but he adds, " Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil " and this we know in part was the real truth, for immediately we hear God saying, " The man is become as one of us to know good and evil." Here we see the lie presented partly in the form of truth : but the truth which was most necessary for man to know, this he kept away entirely, namely, the consequences which would result from the man's taking his advice : this he did not, this he does not, make known to him. He does not tell him it will end in death. This is the way Satan presents his destructive baits, not by simply telling falsehood, but so mixing it up with the truth as to destroy the very soul of man, thus from a liar becoming a murderer. Thus has he brought in the power of evil, the extent of which power is death Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Now all this the energy of the Lord has met in a superior power, which we shall presently see. Satan attempts to meet the power of the Lord Jesus, and to set up his power in opposition to the Lord's. We have an exhibition of it in the case of Job, a favoured servant of God, which was, doubtless, permitted for our learning as well as for Job's profit. We learn from this history how much Satan could bring to play against job, and the circumscribing of that power by the almighty power of God. We are told, " There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? And Satan said, From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Observe, brethren, when Satan is described as going " to and fro in the world," " going about seeking whom he may devour "-under such circumstances we have need of great caution. But let the saints of God feel it is a permitted power, circumscribed, restrained, and subdued at God's will.

In the case of Job we find God saying with authority and permission to Satan, " Behold, all that he hath is in thy power : only upon himself put not forth thy hand." Here was the limitation of the permission ; Satan could get no more. He goes to work at once : we read that " Job's oxen were ploughing, and his asses feeding, and the Sabeans came and took them away, and slew his servants." Again, " fire came down from heaven, and burned up his sheep, and his servants, and consumed them. The Chaldeans came upon the camels, and carried them away, and slew the servants." And lastly " Satan brought a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house in which his children were feasting, and killed them all." Here we see the wonderful extent of the power of Satan, but the further extent of the absolute power of God over the power of Satan ; for the limitation was, " But on himself put not forth thine hand."

Job therefore was invulnerable, his person could not be touched. But after this we have Satan's power further extended by the almighty power of God, but still with a boundary which he could not pass : He allowed his body to be afflicted by the power of Satan: "but," says the Lord, "save his life." Immediately we hear of Job being covered with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, but his life was

spared ; and when his afflictions had done the work for which the Lord permitted them, they were removed; for we hear, " The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning."

Thus blessedly do we see the extent of the power of God over the utmost power of Satan! Many instances of a similar nature might be adduced. We have one in the case of legion, the man in whom were many demons. The power of the living God was acknowledged by these : they were conscious of His superior authority. We learn how far Satan's power extended in the case of this poor man, to what a dreadful extent it was permitted. He wore no clothes , he abode in the tombs night and day, cutting himself with stones : no man could bind him, no fetter could keep him ; but God kept him. Therefore he was still in the wilderness in the way of mercy, therefore he was not driven down into the deep ; he would then have been out of the reach of grace, but his God had not so ordered it, He would not have it so, and therefore the utmost extent of Satan's power could not accomplish that.

Again, we see in Zechariah 3 the futility of Satan's power against those whom Jesus is engaged to defend. Here we view Satan as the accuser of the brethren, endeavouring thus in opposition to meet the priestly character of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua, a type of Israel, stands before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stands as his accuser, bringing forward his accusations, which might be truth, which might be real, which were so in some sense ; but, having been put aside by almighty grace, the accusations are unacknowledged by the Lord as available to his condemnation: the Lord refutes them all with this appeal Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? In this we have the contrast of office between the Lord Jesus and Satan ; one the accuser, having the power of death, the other the priestly intercessor, the giver of life ; one the liar from the beginning, the other the eternal Truth. Satan's effort here is to keep the world from the power of Him who is the Prince of life, and he exercises that power over the children of disobedience.

The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil by bringing souls from the power of Satan to the power of the living God. Observe the way the devil acquired his usurped power over man in the first Adam by presenting evil under the semblance of the truth. Man trusted to his own wisdom, and so permitted Satan to possess this power over him; man became spiritually 'dark, and Satan is the ruler of the darkness of this world; and how does he rule ? By the same way he acquired his dominion over man-not by presenting evil in its own hideous garb ; but in a plausible, insinuating manner he presents things to be desired to make one wise ; and if man is really led to escape his wily snares, he must consent to become a fool in the world's estimation, and to feel that he is such in his own. We find the terrible result sin has wrought is death. Such was the threatened punishment: " In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Man ate, and so sold himself to him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Now Christ has manifested Himself as the Prince of life ; and Satan, in opposition thereto, endeavours to blind the minds of all, " lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And further, when their eyes have been opened, and they have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope laid before them, he would, if it were possible, hinder all comfortable enjoyment of God's presence, all sensible communion with God through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and would dim and darken the path of every child of God, attempting to meet the priestly office of Christ, as Intercessor, by his accusations, and to oppose the testimony of the Spirit in the soul by his own dark counsels. But, to oppose all this artillery of power, we have Jesus passed into the heavens, ever living to make intercession for us at the right hand of God, and in the energy of the Holy Ghost dwelling within us we are enabled to maintain a successful though trying warfare with his temptations within.

The interesting history recorded in this chapter demonstrates indisputably the power of the Lord Jesus in setting aside the utmost power of Satan, in the entire overcoming of that by which Satan shewed his triumph over man. Death was this power; but here we have total subjection of that power to a superior power, to exercise which, in the person of Lazarus, Jesus came to Bethany. Martha, Lazarus's sister, said to Jesus, " Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died ; but I know, that even now whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." The commandment had gone forth at the beginning, when it was said to Adam, "Ye shall die"; that power had been felt and acknowledged, and there was no setting it aside ; there was no power to put it away, even in the case of those whom the Lord loved, but by a power such as sent forth the commandment at the first. By that power alone can death be intercepted, even by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. Jesus says to Martha, " Thy brother shall rise again." Martha replies " I know that he shall rise in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, " I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die : believest thou this ? "

There are two ways in which the Lord Jesus has become the resurrection and the life of His people : first, in purchasing their redemption from the wages of sin, having paid the full price to eternal justice for their transgressions by His voluntary and substituted sufferings ; and also in respect of their oneness with Him who is the very life of all being. We have here the direct personal application of this power to Himself: " I am the resurrection and the life " ; but we see in what sense He here alludes to His power of raising His creatures. There is something special here: a something which meets not the circumstances of every one ; it is definitely applied to them that believe: "He that believeth." It is, therefore, not applicable to all ; and what a recognition of the truth of a special resurrection this is-of the release from death of all that shall believe in Jesus. That makes all the difference - " because I live, ye shall live also," alluding to those who believe in Him. They are the children of the resurrection, which blessing flows from their union with Jesus by the indwelling of the Spirit of life ; as it is written, " If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Here then we have the peculiar, the special, cause of this difference: they are the children of God, therefore the children of the resurrection ; they stand in altogether another character from the children of this world. All shall rise certainly at the coming day of retribution, but it is quite different from the quickening power of life, communicated in virtue of the oneness of the saint with Jesus. Every knee shall certainly bow to Him ; be they godly, or be they earthly, or be they the power of darkness ; whether they be angels, or principalities, or powers, all shall acknowledge Him when He appears. This was just the witness which the devil gave of His power when he came on earth-" Art thou come to torment us before the time ? " Plainly then there is a time set apart, of which they are conscious, when full judgment will be executed on them. " They besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep," or abyss. Though devils, possessing the power of such, they recognised One before whom they quailed. There is a time coming when He, before whom they even then quailed, will bind them in everlasting chains no more to rove about. This almighty power they even then recognised in the Person of Jesus Christ, when apparently in weakness ; therefore they exclaim, under the conscious terror of His power, Do not torment us before the time! Do not command us to go into the pit! He is Lord of all, and His authority extends to, and shall be exerted over, the ungodly, as well as His saints ; in the resurrection all are then brought out of the power of Satan. But the resurrection of which Christ here speaks is peculiar to His own, when He says, " I am the resurrection and the life." " I know," said Martha, " that he shall rise again in the resurrection at

the last day." But what comfort could that bring, as regarded the bare fact Of his rising, for so would the most ungodly sinner rise then ? But the blessedness is this, that where Christ is made the life of the soul, there is the certainty of a resurrection to life eternal in Christ's life; when the life of Jesus comes in, there is that within over which the power of Satan is unable to prevail.

We find, in the occurrences of this beautiful chapter, that it was during the bodily absence of the Lord from Lazarus that death had its power; so it is with us now. This family scene is a type of wonderful things to the church: in the absence of her Lord she feels the power of Satan and death bodily death seizes on her members ; but it shall not always be thus, for Christ shall visit His afflicted family, and when that occurs His very presence will be the power of life. Here is the great secret : Christ's presence gives spiritual life ; and His bodily presence not only raises the dead bodies, but by that presence the further power of death is arrested and interrupted and put aside for ever, as regards His saints ; and according as His presence is felt, so is the power of Satan and the power of death set aside. In His absence is grief, but when He comes, He shall put away both grief and its cause. Now, He may and does allow temptations, and permit the exhibition of the power of Satan in such ; but even now He makes Himself known in spirit as stronger than Satan, quickening the soul, and giving life to His people; sorrow, grief, and distress are here occasioned by Satan, particularly this character of sorrow, brought forward in this narrative before us.

Christ communicates life and liberty to His people ; therefore He says, " I am the life." Though there may be still occasion of death in the world, yet when Christ comes and exhibits Himself, His very presence, which before spiritually quickened the soul, will now be powerful to quicken the mortal body, and clothe it with a glorious immortality: " He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall be live." And He will resuscitate the bodies of those that are dead, and arrest the further progress of death : " He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The consequence of Christ's being present in spirit is now life and liberty : " Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty " ; so, when present in person, all bondage, grief, or sorrow is vanished. He shews us now in spirit, what He will shortly do in person, when the whole power of Satan is set aside. The moment Christ says, I am here, the power of death is gone; when spiritually, it is spiritually gone ; for where Jesus has quickened a soul by communicating His life, there His presence has removed us from all the results of Satan's power in the soul ; the power of the prince of the air has been superseded by the power of the Prince of life : the believer shall be under no power of death as to its results, being translated into another position by the life-giving power of Christ. He that is quickened is quickened unto spiritual and everlasting life-now in spirit, then in person ; it is an inseparable connection.

The power of bodily death will not be manifested in all for we are told in I Thessalonians that some shall be alive when the Lord comes: " For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up," etc. Also, in I Corinthians 15 it is positively said, " We shall not all sleep," for that some shall be alive at His coming ; consequently they never can die, as He says Himself : " He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The presence of Christ naturally induces the absence of death : he that is dead when Christ comes shall be raised ; and he that is alive shall be changed, thus unqualifiedly by His presence setting the power of death aside. The certainty of this resurrection is consequent upon the vital union of the believer with the Lord Jesus Christ, which, therefore, none can experience but such as are united to Him by a living faith. It is quite a distinct thing from the resurrection of those who shall be called out by the word of His power; His very presence vivifies the believer in virtue of his being made a partaker of the divine nature.

It is with this presence then that the believer has to do ; it is for this he is looking. The child of God earnestly longs to enter into the perception of this power, which Christ has spent the travail of His soul to accomplish for him, in order that He may undo the very existence of Satan's power both in body and soul. He has triumphed over the power of Satan in the soul of every sinner who believes in Him-He shall triumph in their bodies also. " I am the resurrection," He says, as well as " the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die : believest thou this ? " It is not simply saying, Men die, and then I raise them again ; but the very power that wrought over them to death yields to His presence both spiritually and personally. Christ, as the first-fruits, rose to shew the certainty of His people's resurrection ; then they which are Christ's at His coming shall rise, when shall be fulfilled the saying that is written, " Death is swallowed up in victory." Here is what the enlightened soul is led to look for the exercise of Christ's power over the utmost power of Satan. If the Spirit testifies within us of the energy of the life of Christ, in the conscious power of His quickening the soul, we have by that the certain evidence that our bodies must also be quickened; for, having made a new man within, think ye, will the Lord suffer it always to occupy an unredeemed body, liable to the power of death and corruption ?

But it is not yet a quickened body: that we feel, most sadly feel. We are then led to ask,. Since it is so, to what use can this mortal body be converted here, since it does not yet partake of incorruptibility ? The only use, dear friends, to which we should convert it is, to make it become a servant to the Saviour. Let the very instruments of corruption minister to godliness : "Yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." There is no bondage in this, dear friends ; it is perfect freedom ; it is the liberty of the child of God, of one who is quickened, made alive, rescued from slavery, made a new man. Satan wars against the dominion of this new life ; but there is no charge that he brings that the Lord at all acknowledges, for the believer stands accepted in the Beloved. The Lord Jesus Christ exercises His priestly office in opposition to the reasonings and accusations of Satan against the saint. Satan brings forward the failings of the old man-the very things which he suggested to the mind, the very sins which by his suggestion the flesh acted out. These he endeavours to press on the conscience, bringing forward the old man, and saying, That is you! and if this is not resisted with a " Get thee behind me, Satan," then we allow him to interfere with our comfort.

But, blessed truth! "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit presents Christ in His priestly office, as having undertaken and accomplished all for the believer; but until the whole body, as well as the soul, is quickened with the life of Jesus, we cannot fully enter into the blessedness of so glorious a liberty: but then we shall manifestly see our entire triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and enter into the full perception of that comforting truth, " Because I live, ye shall also." Still, recognising no good in the flesh, we get peace and comfort by simply resting on the promise of Jesus, that He will change our vile bodies, and make them like unto His glorious body; and that, in the meantime, " sin shall not have dominion over us." The devil would hinder this peace if he could, and seek to do so by entering into controversy with the conscience, and introducing doubts and difficulties, which are encouraged and not repelled, when we are not apprehending Christ in His office of continual Mediator and Intercessor ; but we are strengthened, and Satan's power is humbled, when we are looking up in faith, as united to Jesus, and seeing Him, as " the resurrection and the life," directing us in the prospect of that day when His glory shall be revealed, and when we shall be placed in a proper position to perceive our entire conquest in our glorious Head over the utmost power of evil.

But what the devil is always at here is, to draw us to the commission of evil, to do that which dishonours the Holy One within. And this dims the grace of the Spirit; this is why there are so many sorrowful Christians, because there are so many indulging the lusts of the old man, which shut out the glory ; seeking the gratification of that which they profess to fight against, and not walking in the Spirit, in the liberty of Christ ; but they are grieving that Spirit, and therefore are burdened ; they are not walking in the consciousness of hearing " I am the resurrection and the life." But the time is coming, yea, rapidly coming, when the presence of the Saviour shall be always felt, and when, not only by faith but manifestly, the power of evil shall be set aside ; when the presence of Jesus shall raise us to unspeakable blessedness ; when this corrupt body shall no longer be a clog and hindrance to our spiritual enjoyment, for it shall be entirely conformed to His image, His glorious body. As He has made the souls of His own here to bear His image spiritually, so will He then change the vile body into the image of that body which He now possesses in glory. " As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." " It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Paul speaks of the same to the Philippians, saying, " Our conversation is in heaven ; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Here is what the saint glories to contemplate, and into the contemplation of which he is led by the graciousness of the Holy Spirit, who, coming into the soul, reveals all this glory; and the more of the glory the Spirit unveils, the more He enables us to triumph over the extent of the power of evil here, and to be opposed in all things to that world which knows nothing of these things.

For what does the world know of the glory of Christ ? Nothing : it is led by the spirit of darkness, and sees not the light ; he has blinded their eyes ; and whoever is really led by the teachings of the Spirit of glory is fully conscious that the world is not. Christ has quickened the souls of His people by His life; and in so far as they recognise this life - giving power are they in a capacity to sympathise with Jesus Himself in all these things. This was what Jesus had not while on earth-there was none to sympathise with Him. In sorrow, His sorrows were all His own: none shared them ; they were felt by none. " They all forsook him, and fled." Even in prospect this was felt, when He exclaims, " Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone."

It was the want of this sympathy with Christ of which Paul complained: " All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." We see it here in the instance of Martha : though a saint, though loved of Jesus, she could not enter into the perfect sympathy of the Lord with His own, " I know," Said she, " that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die : believest thou this ? " Not, Do you believe that he shall rise again ? but, Do you believe what I have said of myself as the resurrection and the life of every believer ? But there was no perception of this in her soul : if there had been, it was truly calculated to have conveyed the greatest comfort to her soul : but no, she saw it not ; she just replies, " Yea, Lord, I believe thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world," and there she left Him. She went her way to get sympathy elsewhere, while He, the life of every comfort, and the soul of sympathy, was left.

And are there not many of the Lord's people acting thus now ? Where do we see that fixedness of satisfaction with the love of Christ which precludes all desire for any other sympathy? And why is it thus, dear friends ? Why is it that there is so much of the failing of Martha still to be met with among the saints here? Just for the same reason; they are equally careful and cumbered about many things. She was a

saint indeed, and yet so low that she could not enter into the perception of the Lord's sympathising presence, but went her way and sent her sister Mary in her stead. May the Lord grant that the Spirit may so apply the word to the hearts of His saints here, as to lead them from all false and unsatisfying comforts, more unto sympathy with Jesus!

Dear friends, let me ask you, Are you living on that word of the Lord Jesus - " I am the resurrection and the life " ? Are your souls quickened to know that the power of death is put away, wherever the presence of Jesus is recognised? And are you looking out in joyful anticipation to that time when the presence of the Lord shall raise and quicken your mortal bodies ? and when bodies and souls shall alike partake of His holy likeness, released from sin, released from the power of death and Satan ? when we shall no more offend by yielding to Satan ? when the devil shall have no power to disturb our peace, or the things of the flesh dissipate our joy ? when our rest shall be glorious, for we shall rest with our all glorious Head ? when our joy shall be complete, for we shall enter into the full joy of our Lord ? Till that time, dear friends, let us live in this blessed expectation, having our lights burning, waiting for the morning light when our Lord shall appear, living witnesses of the truth of God's promises ; for He will surely come, He will not tarry. Amen.

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