

Luke 24

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the profound implications of Christ's resurrection and its transformative power in the lives of believers, emphasizing the need for understanding and the role of the Holy Spirit in their mission.

Scripture: Luke 24:1

Topics: "New Life in Christ", "Resurrection"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of the resurrection of Christ in his sermon on Luke 24, illustrating how it introduces a new reality for believers, transcending the limitations of natural life. He discusses the transformation from death to life, highlighting that the resurrection is essential for understanding God's plan and the new identity of Christians. The encounter of the disciples on the road to Emmaus serves as a pivotal moment, where their eyes are opened to the truth of Christ's suffering and glory, leading to their joyful proclamation of His resurrection. Darby underscores that the resurrection is not merely a doctrine but a living reality that empowers believers to witness and live in accordance with God's purpose. Ultimately, he calls for the need of the Holy Spirit's power to fulfill the mission of spreading the gospel to all nations.

Transcript

What now occupies our evangelist is the Risen Man again with His disciples and the testimony to the world founded on the resurrection - this new truth and power above all the principles of natural life. The door of the cross is shut on all that man in the flesh is, and the new thing is introduced in this risen Christ. Resurrection is an entirely new condition; but even the Jew could not have the sure mercies of David without it. Man, lawless and under law, has had the sentence of death pronounced on him. He may pride himself on his natural powers, but he is without God. He has rejected the One who came to him, a man in perfect divine grace, and in so doing has fully shewn what he is. Therefore says the Lord, "Now is the judgment of this world."

An entirely new ground appears, and this is here brought out in Christ Himself. Our bodies are still the same, but the life, character, motive, means, end are altogether new in the Christian. "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new." The women, pre-occupied with their own thoughts and affections, come with their spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus, while He was already living in the perfume of His work and offering before God, having effected all that placed man anew before God the Father, the last Adam in living acceptance. Then they were thrown into an unlooked-for difficulty at first, for

they did not find the Lord's body. Neither did they know He was risen. They understood not that there was neither judgment nor sin remaining. There may be real and great love to Jesus without understanding this. But soon the question was put which involved the answer to all. "Why seek ye the living One among the dead?" These women, faithful if ignorant, were not forgotten of the Lord; and He whose ways are grace has preserved their memorial and their early seeking of the Lord, thence to bear the message to the apostles themselves, but to them the words were as idle tales. Peter's heart, broken and contrite, was the more affected by what he heard, and ran to the sepulchre, and having seen the linen clothes laid aside there, went away wondering. Surely it was a marvellous secret, baffling and rising above all human thought! (v. 1-12).

182 Luke's statements of circumstances are always general. In John we have more details, especially developing Mary Magdalene's devoted affection to His person, but shewing also how little she as yet knew of the power of God in resurrection.

Verses 13-27. The touchingness of this interview with the Lord on the journey to Emmaus need not be spoken of. How the Lord draws out all their thoughts! But He is here altogether as a man, and presenting the truth they speak of Jewishly. How naturally their minds rested always in the same circle! He was a prophet, and they hoped He might redeem Israel. The fact of the resurrection occupied their attention, but it had no link with the counsels of God. They were astonished, and, like others before them, there they rested. Christ takes up quite other ground, though it was only in the way of intelligence and not yet the power of the Holy Ghost. "O fools," says He, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written." These He expounds, and opens their understanding to them; for though viewed completely as man, He operates divinely and spiritually on their mind. "Ought not," said He - was it not the counsel of God plainly revealed in His word? What He presses is the mind of God in the scriptures relative to the Christ. This was an immense step; it took them out of their egotism and the egoistical character of Judaism. Their thought was of the redemption of Israel by power. They had no idea of a new and heavenly life, though of course they had it. Even as to the Christ, death must come in if God were to be vindicated and man really blessed, and so Moses and all the prophets had taught. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" - not set up His kingdom down here, but "enter into his glory."

182 Verses 28-35. Then we have a most graphic account of the scene at Emmaus. "He made as though he would have gone further." Why should He, to their eye "a stranger," intrude? "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And it came to pass as they sat at meat with him, he took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight."

This was not celebrating the Lord's supper with them; yet was it taking up that part of it - the act of breaking the bread - which was the sign of His death. He was not now merely as the living Bread that came down from heaven, but as He had said, "this is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" not which I will take, but give. He did take flesh, of course, in order to give it; but it was His death that became the life of the world. For Jew or Gentile there was no other way. The condition of man was such that he could be quickened only in connection with the cross. All that was in man, as a child of Adam, was under sentence of death and judgment. Christ, by grace, entered into the place of man - came where I am, that I might be on equal terms with Him, as far as acceptance with God; His broken body shews me that I have got that which brings me to God. A dead sinner can find life and divine favour only in a dead Christ. So the Lord had taught in John 6. To eat His flesh and drink His blood must be in order to have life.

It was not any longer a question of His bodily presence merely as incarnate. Redemption was absolutely necessary, and faith in it. Christ is to be fed upon, not alone as a living Messiah, nor only as One alive again for evermore in resurrection; but, besides that, as He who died, His body broken and blood shed in atonement. Thus it was the Lord was known to the disciples at Emmaus, though it was not the Lord's supper. Their hearts had been opened by what encouraged them in connecting the truth of God with the facts of human unbelief and Christ's rejection, and thus turning the cause of their despair into joy and peace by the sight of the counsels of God in it. But His actual revelation was by the affecting circumstance of personal association in the breaking of bread. It was Himself who broke the bread. There could be no mistake. He was gone in a moment - "vanished out of their sight." But His object was gained. They had life through His death.

184 And He was risen. The body was a spiritual body, and had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not. He had shewn them not only the fact, but its necessity. Why does He not say "did," but "must rise from the dead?" Because all the sentence must be passed on the first Adam. All that I have now is in the last Adam: I am not only quickened, but quickened together with Christ, having all trespasses forgiven. Christ, by His death, put them away for all who believe, and for such, all that belonged to the first Adam is clean gone. This is power over the principle of sin, which as a fact is still within. And hence the apostle bids the believers reckon themselves dead to sin. In the power of the Holy Ghost, giving me the consciousness of new life in Christ, I am to mortify my members here below, because I have to apply the death of Christ to my old nature. The monkish principle tries to kill sin in order to get life, but the apostle shews that we must have life by faith in Christ in order to treat sin as a dead thing. See Romans 6, 7, 8.

The holding of the disciples' eyes was of importance. To have recognised Jesus would have been in their state to have satisfied their thoughts. The Lord, on the other hand, engaging their hearts by all God said of Him, furnished them with scriptural intelligence; and then in the act of intimate friendship, which recalled the great truth of His death, brought to mind His great deliverance. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Filled with the concentrating event which began a new world, they hastened back to Jerusalem, where the eleven and others were occupied. "The Lord," said the latter, "is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then the two told the tale of their wondrous journey, and still more wondrous recognition of Jesus in breaking of bread. The Lord was proving that there should be independent witnesses.

185 Verses 36-53. Thus their hearts were prepared. Yet in the fact of this new thing, "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead," there was that to which earthly hearts could ill assort themselves. The Lord presents Himself as the very same man, all through and in every way. In His intercourse with the two, it had been just the same; all was human, though what no man ever was, and what none but God could be, was shewn in and through it. Here also His hands, His feet, His previous wounds are presented. He takes of fish and of an honey-comb, and eats before them. Two sentiments had overpowering possession of the disciples - joy to see Himself again, and astonishment. The Lord presents the truth of resurrection, not as a doctrine, but in living reality, thus restoring their souls and making them know Him most familiarly, risen indeed, but yet a man properly and truly. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

This shewed the standing before God in justification of life and liberty. But another thing was wanted before men-power. This is not the question before God, where the Christian stands as Christ stands, "accepted in the beloved." But the testimony of the Christian here below, whether preaching or anything

else, needs power to be given. This power was promised to the disciples, but even yet they must wait for it. We must not confound service of any kind with standing. The power of the Spirit is requisite to live before man - power over and above the new birth, and distinct from spiritual understanding. This last is needed to give us the apprehension of our standing in Christ; and when He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures, it does not puff up. It is a revelation of Himself and leads to communion with Him. Yet the other want still remains. Even this knowledge is not necessarily power. The testimony and purpose of God in the word has to be fulfilled.

The great truth of a suffering and risen Christ reaches out to the Gentiles. In Matthew His association with the Jewish remnant is taken up. Consequently He meets them in Galilee after, as before, His resurrection; and thence flows the commission to go and disciple all the Gentiles. But all this is dropped in Luke. Jerusalem, Emmaus, and Bethany, above all, are prominent; from thence He ascends to heaven, where He has to do with poor sinners. The testimony was to begin at Jerusalem expressly: the riches of His grace must be shewn first where there was the deepest guilt. The cross broke this link with the Jews as a Jewish Messiah, but opened the door of repentance and remission of sins, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. "And ye are witnesses." Then came in the need of power. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This all-important sign of Christ's exaltation could only be obtained for man by the reception of Jesus in heaven when redemption was effected. The Holy Ghost had ever acted in creation, in providence, in revelation, in regeneration, and in every good thing, but He had never been given before. It hung on the glory of Jesus: to this the Holy Ghost could become a servant in man; for it was the divine counsel and the perfection of love.

186 Meanwhile, before this endowment, they returned with great joy to the city which their Lord had left. Their hearts were filled with the influence of the great fact, that their Master was glorified, though it was still associated with Jewish thoughts. And these two elements reproduce themselves in the Acts of the Apostles, particularly in the earlier part.

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