

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

The Central Truth that Gives Certainty to the Christ-Centered Life

Matthew 12:38-40; John 5:28–29

INTRODUCTION: Two weeks ago we read about Jesus explaining the end times in a single chapter of the Bible, Matthew 24.

Now, most of us here today would accept the statement:

If Jesus said it, it is true!

Most of us would also affirm our belief that:

If the Bible says that Jesus said something, He really did!

And thus, most of us in this place today believe exactly what Jesus said about the end times and everything else.

But not everybody! And if you are here today, but you are not ready to fully affirm either or both of those statements, I do not want you to feel uncomfortable or out of place.

In almost every crowd, large or small, that Jesus talked to, there were those who had questions, doubts, uncertainties, or downright disbelief. Chief among those who had all of those things about Jesus and His teachings were the religious leaders of Jesus' day.

So we read of an encounter that is recorded in

Matthew 12:38–40 NKJV 38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Sermon Title It is the truth of the resurrection of Jesus that gives certainty to a person living the Christ-Centered life.

Jesus called this "The Sign of Jonah" and said it was the only sign that would be given to those looking for proof of who He is. That sign is His resurrection which proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was and is who He claimed to be, the Son of

God, who died on a cross to pay the price for our sins, and who rose from the dead to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now, since today, I am especially trying to help those of you with questions rather than certainty about Jesus or what the Bible says about Jesus, let me quickly assist you with a hang-up some people have about this particular text.

Jesus said he would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. To us that means Jesus' body would have remained in the tomb for 72 hours. He didn't. The biblical chronology is clear, and nowhere in the Scriptures does it try to make it look like Jesus' body was in the tomb three complete days and nights. He was buried, late Friday, before the Jewish Saturday or Sabbath began. He rose around dawn on Sunday morning. All total, He was in the grave a little more than 36 hours.

So what about the three days and three nights? Well, remember, Jesus was not speaking English. He most likely was speaking Aramaic, but possibly Hebrew or even Greek. His words however, are recorded in Greek. But what is important is that those words were recording a Jewish expression that meant "part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday."

It is similar to our word "weekend." If you tell me, "I went camping last weekend," and then I learn that you didn't leave the house until after work on Friday and you came back Sunday morning in time to get to your Lifechange Group, I wouldn't think you a liar. In fact, I would pat you on the back. Weekend includes Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, but it does not have to mean three 24 hour days.

The same is true of Jesus' expression, "three days and three nights."

Now, this whole sermon is not a proof of the resurrection. But I do want to tell you or remind you of what I consider to be

THE MOST OUTSTANDING PROOF THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

- Simply put, it is **The changed lives of the apostles.**
 - **When Jesus was captured, they all scattered.**
 - **Peter even denied he knew Jesus.**
 - **Only John went to the cross.**
 - **The disciples did not even go to the tomb until the women told them Jesus had risen. THANK YOU, LADIES!**
- **Not until after they believed in the resurrection and then the subsequent filling of the Holy Spirit, do we see emboldened, faithful apostles.**

- But then, **every one of them gave the rest of their lives serving the risen Christ who ascended back into heaven.**
- **Most died as martyrs.**
- **They would not have done this for a lie or a hoax.**
- **Each of them met, talked to, touched, and experienced the risen Christ!**

But now I want to share with you the results of Christ's resurrection.

EVERYONE WILL EXPERIENCE RESURRECTION.

- **What happens when we die?**

A person is

- Body – flesh and blood
- Soul – mind, will, feelings
- Spirit – innermost self, capable of communion with God

The body returns to dust (matter).

Genesis 3:19 NKJV ... For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

- Our bodies are made from molecules of the same elements found in everything else in the world, and after we die, our bodies once again break down into those elemental molecules.
- It does not matter how our bodies are disposed.
 - Blown up by a bomb
 - Lost in the sea
 - Buried in a casket
 - Cremated in an oven
- The body returns to dust.

The soul and spirit live on.

- **The soul and spirit of one who trusts in Jesus goes immediately to heaven.**

2 Corinthians 5:8 NKJV We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- **The soul and spirit of one who does not trust in Jesus goes immediately to hell.**

Luke 16:19–24 NKJV “There was a certain rich man who ... died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, ... he cried and said, ... I am tormented in this flame.’

Whether their soul and spirit is in heaven or in hell,

Everybody will participate in the resurrection, both the lost and the saved.

John 5:28–29 NKJV 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

1 Corinthians 15:22 NKJV For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

The lost are waiting in hell.

The saved are waiting in heaven.

But all are waiting for the resurrection!

Jesus said there are two types of resurrection.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE SAVED TO ETERNAL LIFE

How could I possibly say it better than the Scriptures themselves?

John 3:16–18 NKJV 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Acts 16:30–31 NKJV ... “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Romans 10:9–10 NKJV 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Friend, could it be any simpler to understand or any more plain what your options are?

If you trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved.

- **You will go to heaven when you die.**
- **You will be given an eternal body at the rapture. (Dead or alive)**
- **You will live with the Lord forever.**

This my friend is the CENTRAL TRUTH THAT GIVES BOTH HOPE AND CERTAINTY TO THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE.

But, sadly, my friend, the lost will also be resurrected.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE LOST TO ETERNAL CONDEMNATION

John 3:36 NKJV He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Revelation 20:11–15 NKJV 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Again God’s Word is exceedingly plain. There is no need for confusion.

If you trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved.

- **You will go to heaven when you die.**
- **You will be given an eternal body at the rapture.**
- **You will live with the Lord forever.**

If you do not trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you remain lost.

- **You will go to hell when you die.**

- **You will be given an eternal body and brought before God in judgment.**
- **You will be cast into the lake of fire, and because you are in a resurrected body, it will not die – forever.**

Unless we are here at the rapture, we will all die.

We all will be resurrected. Some to eternal life, some to eternal condemnation.

All determined by whether we have trusted in Christ as our Lord and our Savior.