

Text: Various

Title: I Was Dead

Truth: Jesus Died for Sinners

Date/Location: Good Friday April 10, 2020 online at FBC

Introduction

Our starting point text for this weekend is Revelation 1:18.

“I am He who lives, and **was dead**, and behold, **I am alive** forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

Focus on two phrases: “I was dead” and “I am alive.” In this first message, our focus is upon the first statement, “I was dead.”

I. “I will be dead”

You will not find these words quoted in Scripture. They are simply my summary title for the first section of the message in which we will think about Jesus’ predictions of his own death. There are a series of three of them. All three are mentioned in Matthew and Mark. It is also recorded in Luke 18:31-34. We will visit the Matthew version of these.

A. Matthew 16:21-23. It was during the second half of Jesus’ ministry that he began to tell the disciples of the upcoming difficulties He and they would face. The disciples had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God (16:13-20). His public ministry had been largely rejected. Although Jesus did not cease to interact with the public, he focused on teaching the disciples.

In verse 21, the text tells us that Jesus began to show them that He had to go to Jerusalem. He had to suffer many things from the Jewish leaders, and be killed. He also foretold His resurrection.

In verse 22-23, Peter expressed his ignorance of the matter by trying to rebuke Jesus about this. Peter had other plans or hopes for the Lord.

B. Matthew 17:22-23. Jesus reiterated his earlier teaching. The fact that he was going to be killed loomed large in their minds—even larger than the fact that he would be raised. We know this because the text says that they were exceedingly sorrowful. This terrible news was not easy to process.

But how can this be? How did the Man Jesus know these things would happen to Him? Not only so, but He told others about them, and then the things actually occurred as He foretold! Jesus’s human conscience

was able to know this by virtue of the hypostatic union of the human nature and the divine nature of Christ. The divine nature is the second person of the Trinity who as God is omniscient. Jesus was in that way self-aware of Who He was and what His mission was. That awareness had begun at least 20 years earlier, for by the time he was 12 he told his parents that he had to be in and about His “Father’s house” (Luke 2:49).

Jesus could foretell the future just as a perfectly knowledgeable and accurate historian tells of the past. This is something that Peter sort of tried to do when he promised that he would lay down his life for the Lord (John 13:37-38). But it didn’t turn out that way.

- C. Matthew 20:17-19. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He told the disciples a third time about his impending demise. Again, he reported to them how he was to be betrayed, condemned, and delivered to the Gentiles. He would be mocked and scourged and crucified. On the third day, He promised to rise again.

This future was not something that fate had set it for him. It was predetermined by the Father (Acts 2:23) and voluntarily agreed to by the Son. He planned to lay down his life, and he did so lovingly and willingly for His sheep (John 10:15, 17). But He would once again take up his life again. In way that is hard for us, Jesus could lay aside human life as a garment, and pick it back up again at His will.

You can find the other trio of (parallel) verses in Mark at 8:31, 9:30-32, and 10:32-34.

Transition: Review main point I.

II. “I am dead”

- A. Never were these words said in Scripture either, for Jesus was silent to the living world from the grave. Yet, as a title, they reflect the reality that Jesus existed in a state of deadness from Friday afternoon¹ through Sunday morning.
- B. Psalm 16:10 affirms confidently that the believer will not be abandoned in Sheol. So it was for Jesus, but with an extra blessing: he would not see decay. God would prevent his body from languishing long enough in the

¹ By the accounting of some, with which I am sympathetic, Jesus died on Thursday afternoon. This fits more easily the foretold 3 days and nights, whereas a Friday death seems to provide time only for two nights and portions of three days. Others address the seemingly short Passion Week by suggesting “Palm Sunday” should actually be “Palm Monday.”

grave to see significant decay. And perhaps the body was miraculously preserved from even the initial days of decay that occur immediately after death.

C. What was the Lord's condition when he was dead? The body was definitely in the grave, but where was his spirit? After all, the very definition of death is that the spirit leaves the body and goes elsewhere.

His spirit departed from his body when he said "It is finished" (John 19:30). At that time, he gave up his spirit. He committed his spirit to God the Father (Luke 23:46) and yielded up his spirit in Matt. 27:50 and breathed his last.

D. Then there is the consideration of the spiritual state of the Lord. Today, the spirits of those made righteous in Christ by faith depart and go to be with the Lord and eternal blessedness. The spirits of the wicked depart and go to Hades where they suffer torment. Those are the only two destinations that are possible. Now, we would think that Christ is perfectly righteous and went to Heaven. Yet, upon Him were laid the iniquities of us all. He became sin for us, who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). So where does that put Him when it comes to where His human spirit went?

1. The Lord could not go to Hades for further punishment, because He said that the work was finished. I believe this to be a comprehensive statement; the publicly visible work was done *and* all inter-Trinitarian aspects *and* all "spiritual realm" aspects of it were completed as far as the obtaining of salvation and all the other benefits intended by the Father through the cross.
2. But the Lord evidently did not go to "heaven" just yet. He ascended there later. He did something relative to the spirits of those who lived during the days of Noah. This is possibly indicated in Ephesians 4:9,² and certainly so in 1 Peter 3:19. The latter passage indicates the Lord proclaimed his victory to those who lived in the days of Noah but were long dead by the first century. They are called spirits in prison. It was not good news that he proclaimed to them. He may also have informed the demonic powers that their doom was sealed as well. He probably indicated the truth of Col. 2:14-15.
3. The details of this are shrouded in secrecy. We are unable beyond this to know exactly the details of what happened or what was said.

² Although the interpretation "the lower parts, namely, the earth" is convincing. The correlated passages of John 3:13 and Isa 44:23 assist as well.

E. It is of some interest to think about what the Lord must have been thinking in His spirit when he was dead. He knows that he has left the body...but how does He feel?

Transition: Review points I and II.

III. “I was dead”

- A. This is largely the subject that we will consider Sunday. In particular, I am thinking of the past tense of the verb ‘was.’ It is still true today!
- B. The self-awareness of having been dead and now being alive must be quite a strange thing. We shall experience it unless the rapture comes!

Conclusion: Gospel Application

I will be dead too. At some point my soul will be saying to myself “I am dead.” And then again at some point I will recognize that “I was dead.” That will happen at my resurrection when the Lord calls my body forth from the grave.

Plug yourself into these statements. You will be dead. You will say to yourself, “I am dead.” And then again, “I was dead.” You too will be called forth from the grave—some will be to everlasting life, and others to everlasting condemnation.

The reality of your future departure from this life has to sink into your soul. The reality of it is too important and too weighty to be dismissed. That simple but incontrovertibly true fact must inform your present life. The additional fact that you face a judgment evaluation before God for what you have done in the body should send shivers up your spine if you don’t know the way of salvation in Christ.

At that time will come the realization that you are yourself in that state. How can that be? To be dead is not to be unconscious. It is not “lights out.” It is another kind of consciousness. The rich man in Luke 16:23-24 was self-aware and aware of the things around him. See also Rev. 6:9-10.

Finally, each and every person will be raised to new life. Because Jesus Christ was raised on Resurrection Sunday, the first “Easter” morning, all humanity will be raised as well to face that judgment we mentioned a moment ago. Consequently, you too will be able to say, “I was dead.” For the believer, that is the last shred of death that he/she will have to deal with. The unbeliever, however, faces a future that is full of death because there is nothing of life part from Jesus Christ (Rev. 21:8, 20:6).

Text: Various

Title: I Am Alive

Truth: Jesus Lives, so you can live also

Date/Location: Resurrection Sunday April 12, 2020 online at FBC

Introduction

Our starting point text for this weekend is Revelation 1:18. Read from verse 10:

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "**Do not be afraid**; I am the First and the Last.

18 "I am He who lives, and **was dead**, and behold, **I am alive** forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Focus on two phrases: "I was dead" and "I am alive." In our Good Friday Bible meditation, our focus was on the first statement, "I was dead."

Jesus predicted his own death. Then he experienced it. Death is not a state of non-existence. The spirit of a person exists whether in life or in death. So life and death are two different modes of existence. The fact that we don't know much about death, certainly by experience, makes it

desirable to wish it away, but it is too stubborn for that. It will not be banished simply because it is inconvenient. It will insist on having its portion in your life. Even Jesus experienced it, and we are not better than he is.

But afterward He could say, in the past tense, “*I was dead.*” He had a conscious awareness of having been dead, but now being in another state. He is not dead any longer!

I. “I am Alive”

- A. He overcame death! In this message, we look at the phrase “I am alive.” Jesus is alive! Truly he is alive.
- B. The phrase “I am alive” occurs only once in the entire Bible, spoken by Jesus. At the time he is speaking this to John the Apostle in Revelation 1, He had been alive since the resurrection more than 60 years earlier. John had changed a lot in that time. Jesus appeared more glorious than He did before except perhaps on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- C. A similar phrase is “He is risen.” An angel spoke this to the women at the tomb (Mat. 28:6-7). They were instructed to tell the other disciples that very same message. Our proclamation is the same: He is risen!
- D. Let us ponder together a couple of thoughts. First, the comfort of this phrase “I am alive.” Second, what does it mean to be alive?

II. The comfort of this word

- A. Think of all that Jesus overcame to be able to say “I am alive.”
 - The Pharisees.
 - The Sadducees.
 - The Herodians.
 - The lawyers.
 - The crowd’s hatred: crucify!
 - The disciples who left him.
 - Pilate.
 - Herod.
 - Their soldiers.
 - The mocking crowds.
 - The scattered apostles.
 - The denying Peter.
 - Roman executioners.
 - The scourging.
 - The beating.
 - The cross.
 - The battered body.
 - The devil’s temptations.
 - The grave.
 - My sin.
 - The wrath of God.
 - Death.
- B. Dear believer, since Jesus overcame all of that, do you think that He will fail to keep you through your deepest of trials? Of course not! This is a good word to remember when you face trials of all kinds. Jesus says, “Do

not be afraid. I am alive. I am the living one.” Are you in the depths of despair over some problem? Know this, that Jesus said “I am alive.” Facing death yourself or of a loved one? Jesus is alive.

- C. Having conquered death and now being alive forevermore, do you suppose that He will let His people perish? Never!
- D. For the idea to be truly comforting, it must be true. A falsehood may bring false comfort, but only for a time. The falsehood will be uncovered and its comfort will turn to dread and dismay and disillusionment. We are well aware of all the attacks on the resurrection of Christ. But these are false. They are ultimately sourced in the Devil and unbelief. On many an Easter holiday we have explained how the attacks on Christ’s resurrection make no sense given the historical and eyewitness information. The longest running of those, that the disciples stole Christ’s body, is transparently inadequate as an excuse for unbelief. But it is not my intention to rehash that ground today. We can go over it again any time. The fact is that Christians have a well-justified belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is true, and it is very comforting.

III. What is the meaning of “I am Alive”?

- A. I am as far from thinking of this in a philosophical way as most of you probably are. “I think, therefore I am” is a useless bit of rationalistic thought. In reality: “God created the human race and you, therefore you are.” The thought experiment here is designed to ask, from the perspective of Christian doctrine, what it really means to be alive.
- B. In the first place, we know life when we see it. We who are watching this message or reading its notes are alive. We have been born, we have grown, and we have existed. Even if we *don’t* think as a baby or a person with an extreme developmental challenge, we *are*. Human life is exalted and valuable—think of it—worth much sacrifice, protected by law from harm and murder, beloved in the sight of new parents, grieved by loved ones when life is lost, etc. To be alive is amazingly complex. But as wonderful as human life is from conception to death, it is the lowest form of “alive” that a person can be. Why?
- C. **Though** each person is born alive, all are ‘dead’ in trespasses and sins. We are enslaved to that principle in us that wishes to and in fact does violate the law of God. We begin existence in a darkness that is like death in the spiritual realm. We are the walking dead. This kind of dead life is not as alive as Jesus was when he said “I am alive.” He is alive in a state apart

from sin, never dead in transgressions, never enslaved to sin or the devil. If we come not to Jesus, then we are trapped in this state forever.

- D. If we do come to Jesus in faith, turning from our evil ways and acknowledging Him as Lord, then we are born into a new life of light and love and relationship with God. We who are born again can say, “I am alive!” We belong to Christ. This is what it means to be a Christ-follower, a Christian. Most people in this world are not Christ followers, and you can tell by the fruit of their lives. But those that are rejoice that Jesus is alive, and that we are alive in Him. The Christian partakes in the resurrection life and power of Jesus as soon as he or she awakens to faith and repentance.
- E. **But...**even Christians are not yet alive in the sense that Jesus is alive. We still face an appointment with physical death that comes because we live in mortal bodies with the leftover effects of sin still ravaging our race. Disease and parasites from outside, cancer and decay from within, accidents and old age: all are the natural evils that we face. All came about because our race departed from the life-sustaining power of God and went its own proud rebellious way.
- F. When Christians are resurrected from the grave like Jesus was, then we will once again be able to say, “I am alive” but with new depth. We will be in that last phase of life which is eternal, forever, never interrupted.
- G. **But...**even though Christians will be alive, they will never be alive exactly like Jesus is alive, because He is God the Son. He was alive before there was any life on this planet, before there were any angels or demons or anything else. He is the creator and author of life (Acts 3:15). Without him, nothing was made that was made (John 1:3). He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18, Rev. 1:5), the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) of all who become alive. Go ahead and read 1 Cor. 15:20-26, and the entire chapter. This text is a great encouragement to our faith.
- Because Jesus is alive, all people shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). We enjoy the prospect of Christ’s coming because of this. Others hate it.

Conclusion

Which three phrases describe you right now? Are you physically alive? Spiritually dead? Spiritually alive? Subject to physical death? Eternally alive? (Not yet.) But never just like Jesus. He is the very pinnacle of what it means “to be alive.” Ponder the process...birth into physical life; re-birth into spiritual life; physical death into eternal life. We will really be alive then!

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