

When They Shall Rise

It is a fearsome thought that the Son of God looked into the faces of a group of devoutly religious men and condemned them saying, 'ye therefore do greatly err'. They erred in their ignorance of the living God; they erred in rejecting the testimony of scripture concerning resurrection from the dead; they erred by refusing to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. In our earthly lives we make little mistakes and we make big mistakes, but in matters of eternal life if we do not trust Christ we have erred greatly and the consequences are eternal.

Wise unto salvation

People right now are erring greatly in matters of their soul's eternal destiny. We worry about jobs, family, health, finance, and many other things, yet are careless for our souls. The preaching of the scriptures, through the faith which is in Christ, makes us wise unto salvation. May God grant us faith, shake us from our sleep of death, rouse us before it is too late, and awaken our souls to everlasting life in Jesus Christ.

The great error of false religion ...

There seems to be a censure here particularly aimed by Christ at false religion. These men were Sadducees, a theological school of teachers and students who rivalled the Pharisees. This day in the temple they took their turn to oppose the ministry and preaching of the Lord Jesus. The Sadducees studied the Bible, honoured their teachers, quoted their favourite passages, and attended religious services, but still, says the Lord, they greatly erred.

... is ignorance of Christ

Being religious is no guarantee of spiritual understanding. No doubt these men could argue black was white and prided themselves in possessing truth others did not have. We are reminded of the 'many' who will say to Christ in that last day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (or preached) in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils (or won converts)? and in thy name done many wonderful works?' Then will come the Lord's solemn reply, 'I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity'.

Yet wise in their own eyes

The Sadducees came to Jesus posing a question about marriage, inheritance, and Jewish tradition, but their real purpose was to provoke Jesus into saying something they could seize upon concerning the physical resurrection of the dead. Likely their story was just a contrived device to make their point. Perhaps they had previously enjoyed some success using it to baffle their rivals and confound their opponents. It has the ring of a tried and tested argument.

A bride for seven brothers

Matthew, Mark and Luke all relate the Sadducees' saga of seven brothers who die in turn each having been married to one woman. The Sadducees give their story a veneer of Old Testament legitimacy by linking it to ideas of inheritance and raising up children to the dead, but its purpose was to mock the principle of physical resurrection. Indirectly, they were also denying the Lord's miracles when he raised the dead.

Wrong assumptions mean wrong conclusions

As often happened in these situations the Lord exposed the Sadducees' foolishness by cutting through their knotty problem and exposing the false assumptions upon which their argument was built. Asking, 'whose wife shall she be' in the resurrection merely showed the ignorance of these men concerning the coming resurrection state where, says the Lord, 'they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven'.

A word to the wise

Thankfully, the Lord does not let these men off with a simple rebuke without first taking opportunity to teach his disciples and followers about what to expect in the resurrection. He draws several beautiful implications from Moses' encounter with the Lord at Horeb to show how the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the living God of living people. Furthermore, His people being very much alive and heirs together with Christ, will enjoy in their souls, spirits and glorified bodies all the covenant blessings stored up for them in Christ.

The God of the living

In tomorrow's service we shall look at the Lord's teaching and note:

1. Our God is the living God who keeps faith with all His covenant people.
2. Grace brings new life, spiritual life, and the crown of life to all God's elect, and we shall never die.
3. These corrupt bodies will be raised from our graves and changed into incorruptible bodies ever to dwell with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

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