

The Struggle of Life and Death

Luke 24:1-8
April 17, 2022

He is risen! Please open your Bibles this morning to Luke 24.

Growing up as the son of a taxidermist, I always loved TV shows about wildlife. Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom was probably my favorite and I still love those types of shows. The photography has gotten better but I miss Marlon Perkins and his assistant who was always risking **his** life while Marlon narrated. One reality that is often displayed in these programs is the struggle between life and death. A pride of lions attempts to take down a cape buffalo for dinner. A mother bison battles a pack of wolves over her newborn calf. That's a struggle that's been going on for a long time and one that we all have a stake in. To find out how it turns out, please stand if you are able as we read from Luke 24:1

Luke 24:1-8 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" 8 **Then** they remembered his words.

Say life. Life is a very special gift. Life is a privilege and a blessing. Life is the ability to move and act and feel and perceive with our senses. It is the ability to interact with our surroundings. The more we sense and experience, the more alive we feel. We sometimes say we are "fully alive." Although we all know what life is, it is not very easy to define. Encarta tries with 14 different definitions of life most of which use "living" in some way. The primary definition is "the quality that makes **living** animals and plants different from **dead** organisms and inorganic matter." So we also define life by what it is not. It's not dead. Of course death is the absence of life as darkness is the absence of light. It is very difficult to discuss one without the other. And so we will do both today as we discuss the struggle of life and death.

We talk about the miracle of life. Evolutionists prattle about life just happening, just springing spontaneously from some prehistoric soup when lightning struck or something else suddenly interjected life into this world. They have yet to describe how exactly that happened. They have tried to replicate it many times and create life on their own, only to be met with thousands of failures. They know about the amino acids that make life possible, they know about oxygen and what goes on in every living cell but still

they cannot make life. We humans have created life-like things, robots, virtual reality, even artificial intelligence, etc. But so far we have been unable to create life itself.

So where did it come from? 1 Tim 6:13 tells us that God is the One Who gives life to everything. So God is the source, the spring, the supplier of all life. As such, life is not only physical, but spiritual in nature. All life comes from God. The first living plants arrived on Day 3 of creation and the first animals on Days 5 and 6.

Human life finally got here late on Day 6 when God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a **living** being. That life was given to Eve as well and they passed it down to their children and grandchildren until it has finally come down to us. You and I got our life from our parents who got it ultimately from Adam and Eve who got it from God. And when God gave us this life, He gave it for keeps. God created us to live forever, period.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve passed something else down to us as well. The national Debt. (Just seeing if you're still awake.) Say death. As we mentioned, death is the end of life and to be dead is the absence of life. Death was not part of God's original plan but entered Creation when Adam and Eve sinned. Just like life, we got our death sentence from Adam and Eve as well.

Human life is very precious. The Bible says that even the animals have the breath of life in them, but human life is on a plain above all other types of life as demonstrated by numerous scriptures and is the only life protected in the Ten Commandments. In fact, the taking of animals' lives is required by the OT law for sacrifices. When life ends and death comes, humans have known since Cain killed Abel that it would not return again. Abel did not spring back to life. When Adam finally died at 930 years of age, it was final. He wasn't coming back. He lived and had life nearly 1000 years, but he has now been dead for over 5,000. Although his image, his genes, his essence lives on through his offspring, he himself was now dead and his life was over. Forever, or so it seemed.

So our ancestors wrestled with life and death. Realizing that human life was different and unique, most cultures have buried their dead often with some type of ceremony. Hoping, praying, wishing that somehow we can see our dead loved ones again. Even atheists grieve and often memorialize their loved ones hoping for some type of life beyond the grave. But death reigned from Adam onward.

And then, into this world of death and dying, came Jesus. In the very first chapter of his Gospel, just four verses in, John tells us, "In him, (that is, Jesus) was life, and that life was the light of men." In the One through whom all things were made. In the One John the Baptist would call, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the

world.” And by the way, if the Lamb takes away sin, guess what else He takes away? Death goes with it!

In John 6:(47-48) Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life.” Later in that same chapter, He says, “(53-54)... "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Jesus is life and wants us to have life! In John 10:10 He says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Jesus wants us to experience the fullest and the most abundant life we can possibly have. And it’s only found in Him.

John goes on to tell us what Jesus called Himself in the Upper Room when He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life! No one comes to the Father, except through me!” Jesus is life, in Him is life, and He is the life giver! Because Jesus is part of the Trinity, in Acts 3:15, Peter calls Jesus “the author of life.” Even all non-believers enjoy their life that has come from Jesus, for there is no other supplier of life.

And so, on that day we call Good Friday, just a few hours after Jesus declared Himself “the Life”, His life and His light were snuffed out on the cross. Because He was born through Eve’s line, He too died, though He had not sinned. Rather He took our sins and died for them all. But He was dead. Say dead. Even though He said, “Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die,” He was now dead Himself. How could a dead Man give life to anyone? So they buried Him in Joseph’s tomb. They rolled a big stone in front of it to keep the critters out and the stench in, and that was that. Like it had been for everyone else who had ever died since Abel.

Except Jesus is the life! And early in the morning on that first day of the week, the life that was the light of men, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Resurrection and the Life, the Author of life, came roaring back to life again never to die! Since He is the life, the angel asked the women in today’s scripture, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? (You’re in the wrong aisle! The wrong department!) He is not here; he has risen!" For the first time in world history, someone who had died was now living again and would never slip back under death’s spell.

So what? So what does that mean for the rest of us? Does this mean that only those who died after Jesus can live again? What about Adam and Noah and Abraham and David and Ruth and etc? What about those who don’t believe in Jesus today? In John 5:(28-29), "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Say all. **All** who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out! Even those who may not want to come out will come out. God created us with eternal souls! In Revelation 20, John sees all the dead, great and small standing before God's throne. The saved and the unsaved. All who have ever lived, who are living now or who will ever live **will** come out of their graves, wherever or however they may be! Even secular scientists are now saying that.

Dr. Frank Tipler is a professor at Tulane University and is an expert in physics, information, relativity, and cosmology. He was also an atheist who didn't think much about God or resurrection. He spent 17 years working on a project to reconcile all that we know about science, DNA, life, and the universe. He came up with two conclusions he wasn't looking for. 1. God does exist. Big surprise. But remember he started out an atheist. 2. It is likely that every human being who ever lived will be resurrected from the dead. Just like the Bible said! Wow. Once again science is catching up with the Bible! All will come out of their graves!

And they shall live forevermore in one of two places. Vs 29 tells us those who have done good will rise to live---if you want to trust in all your good works, go ahead, but you still have to get rid of your bad ones. I'll take Jesus' good works, Jesus' righteousness in place of my own that I might rise to live even as He rose to live! John 5:24 Jesus said, "whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life, will not be condemned and has crossed over from death to life." Hear Jesus' word and believe on the One who sent Him and cross over from death unto life!

God doesn't do things willy nilly. Jesus entered Jerusalem on the exact day Daniel prophesied He would, exactly the way Zechariah prophesied He would. He was crucified on the Feast of Passover as the perfect Lamb exactly as David and Isaiah prophesied He would. He was slaughtered for all and He rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits. That means that His resurrection is the first of all the rest to come. All human beings will be raised from the dead, period. Whether you like it or not. Because He lives, we all too shall all live! For He is risen!

The crucial question then is this, is where and how will you live forever? And that depends on what we do now with Jesus' death and resurrection that we have before us this morning. In John 6:40, Jesus said, "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and **believes** in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." If you want to live forever instead of dying forever, you must look to the Son and believe in Him. Not just believe that Jesus lived, died, or even rose from the dead. Praise God for that. But this word believe means to totally commit your life to. Many people today say they believe in God or even in Jesus, but they are living for self or something else. They are trusting their good works or whatever else. They have never committed their whole lives to Him. Jesus also said (John 3:36) "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath **remains** on

him." Say remains. That word indicates that the current state for those who do not believe in Jesus is a state of being under God's wrath. That's a horrible place to be for eternal punishment awaits all who are there.

But it doesn't have to be that way and God doesn't want it to be that way! John 3:16 is about life! That whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have what? Everlasting life! Again, believe means to depend on. Trust entirely. Not your good works, not your giving, not your knowledge, not your parents faith, not your church membership, not your baptism, or anything else. Only Jesus' sacrificial death for you! And you will cross over from death to life!

This is why it's so important that you know Jesus. And that if you know Him that you worship and serve Him faithfully. That you bring your children to Sunday School and worship that they may know, love, worship, serve, and obey King of kings and Lord of lords. That you introduce your friends and family to Jesus. There is life in no other name and no other place. There's no life in NASCAR or football, in shopping or hunting, in politics or sex or softball or music or anything else. As enjoyable as all these things may be, and although we can bring life to them, the only source of life and life eternal is Jesus Christ.

Not only creation and not only history, but the Bible too is full of death. Various forms of that word are used 1,078 times throughout God's Word. That's a lot of death. But I also did a search of various forms of the word life and it is used 1436 times! Life wins! God wins! Death loses. All down through history, there has been this ongoing struggle between life and death. It appeared that death had won because of Adam's sin and that it was all over, until Jesus scored the winning goal once and forever when He walked out of His tomb on Resurrection morning.

In some football games, it goes back and forth and it sometimes comes down to who has the ball last. Not so with this cosmic struggle of life and death. Jesus has won this battle once and for all. His victory over death that first Easter morning was the decisive score, never to be outdone. His resurrection scored a ten billion point touchdown against a foe that can't even muster a field goal. (1 Cor 15:55-57) O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Jesus wins! And He didn't just defeat death. Paul writes in 2 Tim 1:10 "... Christ Jesus, ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light..." Jesus destroyed death!

I like a winner, and Jesus is He! The long struggle between death and life is already over and Jesus has won! Life has won! The question is, are you on His side? It's not a matter of Him being on yours, you've gotta be on His! I don't know about you, but I want to live forever. And I certainly don't want to do it in hell's

misery. I want someone who has the power over death and hell and the grave and I only know One who does and His name is Jesus. And He is risen! In the very last verse of John's Gospel, he says, (John 20:31) "... these (things) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have **life** in his name." 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." It's just that simple. In the very next verse He says, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." I know that I have eternal life and I want you to as well! Praise God, we can have victory in our struggle with death. We can have everlasting life through Jesus Christ, for He is the Life and He is risen!