

Gospel of John Chapter 20A

Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy, 1789

“Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

- Benjamin Franklin’s view of the certainty of death is certainly something that can be supported Biblically.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 **For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
2 a time to be born, and a time to die;**

Psalms 90:10 (Moses laments) **The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

Job 14:1 **“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. 2 He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.**

In Psalm 89: 48 (The Psalmist asks rhetorically) **What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah**

Ponce De Leon’s lifelong search for the fountain of youth, left him dead;
Baseball Legend Ted William’s sought to cheat death through Cryonics;

- All the vain attempts to change or postpone the inevitable destiny of mortal man fail miserably. The Word of God declares:

Hebrews 9: 27, **It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,**
Eccl 8:8, **No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.**

In 1 Corinthians 15:26 Death is viewed as an enemy. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

- Here is Difficult question: HOW can an enemy, so pervasive, so powerful ever be destroyed?
- Will modern medicine eventually overcome death? Is there a fountain of youth? Will cryonics preserve life for a future hope? NO!
- **ONLY THE RESURRECTED LORD JESUS** provides man with a living hope and breaks the death grip on man.

Hebrews 2: 14 **Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he (Jesus) himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

John Calvin: (commenting of Hebrews 2) “We find in this brevity of words a singularly striking and powerful representation, and that is, that he has so delivered us from the tyranny of the devil, that we are rendered safe, and that he has so redeemed us from death, that it is no longer to be dreaded.”

For those who believe, Death holds the promise of glory. Setting aside this fleshly body is described as “Mortality taking on immortality.” 1 John 3:2 “when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

John 6:50, Jesus describes himself as “the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.”

John 8:51, (Jesus said) Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

Jesus comforted Martha, the sister of Lazarus saying: John 11:25 “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

- And then he did the unthinkable, Jesus revealed his authority over death by resurrecting Lazarus from the grave.

Paul declares that Jesus is the one: “who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” (2 Timothy 1:10)

The abolition of death was the grand finale of a glorious life in which Jesus clearly displayed the kingdom of God

- Dominion over nature, (walked on water, spoke to the storm, multiplied fish and bread)
- Power over sickness, disease and death (healed every sickness, gave sight to the blind, mobility to the lame and raised both young and old from the dead)
- Authority over the spiritual realm, (withstood the tempter’s snares in the wilderness by the power of the Word, he sent demons fleeing in every direction)

BUT nothing more clearly reveals the greatness of his power than his own resurrection. He displayed a power over death that NO man had ever demonstrated.

Returning to the Gospel of John, this morning we are going to see THREE manifestations of Christ’s power over death, each fulfilling specific prophecies.

- His power over death is revealed in his dying,
- In his burial and
- In his resurrection.

1. Christ’s power over death: Manifested in his dying: WHAT DO I MEAN BY THAT? In his death, Jesus was not a victim but a victor. Death did not overtake him he voluntarily yielded himself to death on His terms.

John 19:31 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. 35 He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may

believe. 36 For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

- As we have experienced (too frequently) this year, death is an unexpected visitor that takes many by surprise. BUT this was not the case for the Lord Jesus.
- We have come to know from God’s Word **that the wages of sin is death**; but Jesus was sinless, he was one man who never should have died.
 - Think about that, The crowds who wanted to stone him couldn’t take him, the sea that rose up against him could not drown him, no demon could destroy him.
 - We read that after he had accomplished the work of redemption he cried **“It is finished”** he bowed his head and (willingly, sacrificially) gave up his spirit.

In John 10: 17 **For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”**

- Take a second look at how John describes Christ’s death:

John 19: 30 **When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

- Jesus actually died much sooner than most men who were crucified. Mark 15:25 he was crucified at 9:00 Am and died at 3:00 in the afternoon.

Mark 15:44, **When Joseph came to ask for the body of Jesus, Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead.**

- Most victims of crucifixion hung on the cross for days.
- Jesus gave up his spirit when he chose to do so. (John tells us) This ALSO fulfilled prophecy concerning him:

In John (19:31) we learn it was the preparation for the Sabbath, and the Jews didn’t want dying bodies to remain on the cross during the Sabbath they asked Pilate to have the legs of the victims broken. (The Sabbath began at 6:00 PM on Friday night.)

- Most likely the Sanhedrin had Deuteronomy 21 in mind:

Deuteronomy 21: 22 **“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.**

Breaking the legs of a crucified person was done to hasten the victims death. In this gruesome procedure the person’s legs were smashed with an iron mallet. This would forbid one’s ability to press up on the legs to breathe. Death came in a matter of minutes.

Psalms 34: 19 **Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. 20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.**

- Instead of breaking his bones the soldiers pierced the side of the Lord.

John 19:34 **But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.**

- This too is a fulfillment of scripture, for the prophet Zechariah says:

Zech 12: 10 **“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.**

You see that the power of Christ was manifest even in his dying.

2. The Power of Christ Manifest in his Burial

John 19:38 **After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. 39 Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. 40 So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.**

- Let's take into consideration these facts:
- Jesus came from a poor family, throughout his ministry it was evident that he never built up a savings account, never owned property, didn't have life insurance, no IRA.
- The Romans normally refused to allow executed criminals to be buried, their bodies were left were left out in the open where vultures and other scavengers would eat them as the ultimate indignity.
- The Jews did not refuse burial to anyone BUT they buried criminals in a separate location outside of Jerusalem.
- With all of that in mind, consider the words of the Isaiah's prophecy as he foretells the burial of the Messiah:

Isaiah 53: 8 **By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.**

How is it that Jesus managed to be buried with the rich? He is dead!

Consider the words of the Apostle Peter:

1 Peter 3:18 **For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,**

- Jesus was put to death in the flesh BUT made ALIVE in the spirit and in the spirit he moved upon the heart of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin and secret disciple of the Lord Jesus to ask Pilate for custody of His body.
- This was certainly a bold act on Joseph's part. Without doubt he would have born great criticism from the rest of the Sanhedrin.

Mark 15:43 **Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.**

- God sovereignly works through the courageous acts of mere men in the fulfillment of prophetic scripture.
 - The initiative and motivation of these works originate from the Spirit, the courage and ability to carry out the divine will is God's gracious provision as well.

Philippians 2:13 **for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

- He sovereignly oversees the intricate working out of everything he has communicated through the mouths of the prophets.
- THAT should provide us with GREAT hope and expectation as we draw ever closer to the return of the Lord Jesus.

3. His power over death is revealed in his resurrection.

Christ's power over death was manifest through his dying and through his burial, but the greatest manifestation of his power over death is seen in his resurrection.

The Apostle Peter bearing witness of Christ's resurrection on the day of Pentecost boldly declares:

Acts 2: 22 **"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.**

- **"It was not possible for him to be held by death" WHY???**
- Because (Isaiah 53) **"He had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth."** Jesus was the sinless Lamb of God!
- Hebrews 1:3, **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

Consider the powerful words of the Prophets as they saw from afar Christ's great victory over death:

Isaiah 25: 7 **And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.**

- There on Mt Zion, the veil of mourning that hangs over ALL humanity, the veil of separation due to sin was swallowed up. God himself has accomplished this.
 - The veil in the temple???Represented the separation of man from God that came through the fall.
- Death will be swallowed up forever and the mourning and reproach of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once and for all!
- The Apostle Paul elaborates on Isaiah 25 when he declares:

1 Corinthians 15: 54 **When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in**

victory.” 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 1:10 Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Pay attention, this is where WE make application of John 20 to our own lives:

In the Gospel of John, chapter 20 the Lord Jesus reveals himself to a small group of people.

- Mary Magdalene – John 20:16, he called her by name “Mary” she responded, “Rabboni.”
- 10 Disciples in the upper room – John 20:19 Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”
- Thomas – John 20:26, Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” (Put your finger here, see my hands put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”)

He didn’t walk into Jerusalem and show himself to Pilate, He didn’t show up at the next meeting of the Sanhedrin....

Acts 1:3 To them (The Apostles) he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

It was to these men that he said: John 20:21 “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

It was those to whom He revealed himself, ALIVE from the DEAD that He sent out to bear witness of his resurrection.

- THEY were the foundation (Ephesians 2) on which the church of J.C. was built.
- They would stand before the Sanhedrin,
- They would go into all the earth
- They would bear witness of the resurrection

WE, who have received New Birth, WE who have been made alive through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, We have become the structure of the church, built upon the firm foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.

WE now take up the Great Commission and bear witness of the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.