

**Text: Ac 24.14-16, 21**

Last week we surveyed Paul's formal defense before Felix in Caesarea. The event was a formal Roman civil trial, something held daily in Rome and other administrative centers. One of the leading functions of the governors of a Roman province was to sit at these trials and make judgements concerning the complaint.

We've seen a couple of these before in the book of Acts.

- In Thessalonica the Christians offered a pledge of good conduct to defuse the charges of the Jews.
- In Corinth, the proconsul of Achaia dismissed the charges of the Jews against Paul, declaring their dispute with Paul not worthy of his attention.

Here, we see essentially the same complaint, and we see Paul go through the charges and demonstrate quite clearly that he is innocent of them and certainly Felix ought to set him free.

Of course, it didn't quite work out that way as we will see next week.

Today I want to go back to Paul's defense and pick up a thread that I brushed by as part of Paul's argument. I wanted to get the whole picture in our heads before isolating a detail.

The detail is found in vv. 14-16 and mentioned again in v. 21.

Read Ac 24.14-16, 21

Our theme is the theme of resurrection, or as Paul specifically calls it:

*The Resurrection of the Righteous and the Wicked*

When we think about the resurrection, usually we think only of the resurrection of the righteous. We think of such things as the rapture...

<sup>1</sup>Th 4.16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.<sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

And we think of such things as heaven...

Heb 11.16 But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

But our phrase says, *the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked*. What does the resurrection of the *wicked* have to do with the resurrection of the righteous? Why would Paul connect the two? Especially in this trial?

Today we want to understand the doctrine and highlight the importance it has in Paul's defense. Even more, we want to understand what it means for people of our day.

**Proposition:** The doctrine of the resurrection is more distorted than discerned, more denied than loved, yet it points at the heart of life's most important decision.

## I. The belief "these men cherish themselves"

### A. The divisions of belief among Judaism

1. Sadducees: denied the resurrection
  - a. Only accepted Pentateuch
  - b. Claimed no statement about resurrection there
2. Pharisees: believed in the resurrection
  - a. Accepted whole OT
  - b. More numerous than Sadducees
  - c. More approved of the rest of the Jews

The commentaries assume that Paul refers especially to the Pharisees present when he makes this statement.

### B. The threads of resurrection doctrine in the OT

1. A hint in the Pentateuch (Dt 33.6)

Dt 33.6 "May Reuben live and not die, Nor his men be few."

- a. Not explicit
- b. Yet cited in some Jewish references

## 2. Job 19.25-26

Job 19.25-26 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. <sup>26</sup> “Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

- a. Date of Job debated (some think first book of OT)
- b. Yet not conclusive for Sadducees as not part of Torah

## 3. Much more in the Ps and Isa and Hos

Ps 16.9-10 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. <sup>10</sup> For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Ps 17.15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

Ps 49.15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.

Isa 25.8 He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

Isa 26.19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

Isa 52.8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up *their* voices, They shout joyfully together; For they will see with their own eyes When the LORD restores Zion.

Hos 13.14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

All of these references are hopeful, and have in view the resurrection of the righteous.

#### 4. The most important text: Dan 12

Dan 12.2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.

Dan 12.13 “But as for you, go *your way* to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise *again* for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

- a. Here we have the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked
- b. The Jewish doctrine of the resurrection developed from these passages
- c. Pharisees rose with the Maccabees, and formed a party in Judaism influencing thought at the time of Christ and the apostles
- d. From a pro-Maccabee “pseudepigrapha” document:

<sup>8</sup> Then shall we all be changed, some into glory and some into shame; for the Lord judges Israel first for the unrighteousness which they have committed. <sup>9</sup> And then so (shall He judge) all the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup>

#### C. The state of belief common to Paul and other Jews

1. A general hope of resurrection “to the good”
  - a. *i.e.* the expectation of divine approval
  - b. Hope for “glory,” “everlasting life,” “joy,” “restoration”
2. Yet a certainty of judgement:

“the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt” (Dan 12.2)  
 “some into shame” (Test of Benj)

<sup>1</sup> “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Benjamin 10.8-9,” in Robert Henry Charles, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

## II. The implication of the doctrine: judgement to come

- A. The resurrection of both righteous and wicked implies distinction and judgement

“To mention the resurrection of the unjust could only imply one thing—the coming judgment. Paul was not about to miss the opportunity for witness. Even the Gentiles present, who might not comprehend the idea of the resurrection, would have some understanding of judgment...”<sup>2</sup>

- B. The New Testament concurs with this distinction

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Mt 25.31-34 ¶ “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; <sup>33</sup> and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ...  
Mt 25.41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ... Mt 25.46 “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Jn 5.28-29 “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 483.

Rev 20.12-15 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

### C. The implications of judgement

1. All men are guilty of some unrighteousness
2. God's evaluation awaits, and God will decide between men
3. Who can stand before the omniscient, inscrutable eye of God?

## III. The resistance to the doctrine

### A. The Sadducees resisted the doctrine

1. They were materialists, denying the immortality of the soul
2. Their kingdom was now, they wanted power, wealth, pleasure now, in this life
3. They rejected the notion of accountability to God

### B. The expectations of modern men

1. On the one hand, they deny accountability to God
  - a. They will deny there is a God who will hold accountable
  - b. Or they will deny a judgement, or hell, so there are no consequences
  - c. Or they deny sin: "I'm not so bad..." "I'm basically a good guy..."
2. On the other hand, they will assume a place of blessedness to come (though they may still deny life after death)
  - a. "He's in a better place..."

- b. They expect that they will be in a place of no suffering after death
- c. They expect to see loved ones someday

On what basis? (Inconsistent beliefs)

### C. The folly of resistance

1. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun
2. There is hope in repentance and faith, and only there
3. Put your faith in Jesus Christ, who died as your substitute and rose to give eternal life: but only to those who believe in him

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs had a Christian gloss in the section quoted earlier:

<sup>10:8</sup> Then also all men shall rise, some unto glory and some unto shame. And the Lord shall judge Israel first, for their unrighteousness ; **[[for when He appeared as God in the flesh to deliver them they believed Him not]].**<sup>3</sup>

Here is the preaching of the church: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved!

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** The doctrine of the resurrection is more distorted than discerned, more denied than loved, yet it points at the heart of life's most important decision.

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<sup>3</sup> "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Benjamin 10.8-9," in Charles, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.