

Theme: **SLIDE** Jesus Answers Hard Questions

Object: Zebra

Scripture: "For they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke 20:36 ESV)

SLIDE One of the most interesting animals on earth is the zebra. The zebra's natural home is in the grasslands of eastern and southern Africa. Most of you have seen a zebra in the zoo. Here are some interesting facts about the zebra.

- The zebra is a member of the horse family and can run at speeds up to 35 miles per hour.
- They grow to be about 4 to 5 feet tall.
- Baby zebras, called foals, can walk within about 20 minutes after they are born.

Now, here is an interesting question for you. Are zebras white with black stripes, or are they black with white stripes? **SLIDE** Some people say that since they have a white belly, they are white with black stripes. **SLIDE** Others argue that if you shave all the zebra's hair off they have black skin, so they are black with white stripes. This has been a question that has been debated for hundreds of years. To be honest, I'm not sure about it myself. **SLIDE**

In Jesus' day there were people that liked to argue and discuss questions like the stripes on the Zebra. One such group was the Sadducees – Jewish religious leaders who did not believe in the resurrection. One day a group of these leaders came to Jesus and asked him a question in an attempt to trick him into agreeing with them that there was no resurrection. They asked him to answer this question: "The law of

Moses says that if a man dies, leaving a wife but no children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother's name. Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children. So the second brother married the widow, but he also died. Then the third brother married her. This continued until all seven brothers had married the same woman. Finally, the woman also died. So tell us, whose wife will she be after the resurrection since all seven were married to her!"

My, that is a hard question, isn't it? Well, it didn't stump Jesus! Just as Jesus knows the answer to the Zebra question, for He created Zebras, He knew how to answer this question.

Jesus answered, "Marriage is for people here on earth. But in heaven, those who are raised from the dead will not marry or be married. Not only that, but they will never die again. They will live forever as the children of God."

After Jesus answered them so wisely, no one else dared to ask him any questions. Not even the Zebra question.

Now, you and I know that the Bible promises us that if we love Jesus and trust in Him, we will live forever in heaven with Him. Isn't it sad that some people do not believe there is a resurrection and eternal life in heaven?

Dear Father, we are happy today that there is a resurrection and you have promised us eternal life in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Slide Two Resurrections

Job pondered life and death and what was to come, as all people have since the fall of Adam, when he asked, **Slide** “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14 ESV) The Bible is clear in answering this age-old question. The scriptures say, “Yes.” All people, both believers and unbelievers, will be raised from the dead to live for eternity. Here in our passage of study this morning Jesus begins not by speaking of physical life and death, but of spiritual.

Slide The First Resurrection

Turn in your bibles to John chapter 5, verse 24. Jesus is speaking, “Truly, truly, (or amen, amen) I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” The first point we see here is that Jesus is speaking of the “first resurrection” which is spiritual, not physical. Divine life begins with God’s action, not mans. People are born physically alive, but are spiritually dead. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 2, **Slide** “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:1-2 ESV) So, all mankind born of woman lives physically but are dead in their trespasses and sins spiritually. Because Jesus conquered dead by His resurrection, as Paul explained to the Romans, we know that God regenerates our souls **Slide** “...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4 ESV) God breaths spiritual life into our souls and gives us faith in Christ and we then may have

total confidence that even though our earthly bodies will wear out, we will one day receive resurrected bodies that will endure forever. In Philippians God tells us, **Slide** “...our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” (Philippians 3:20-21 ESV) How many things are subject to the authority of Jesus? That’s right, “All.” Is not everything in the universe subject to His authority? As God’s children we should submit to Christ and serve one another with love and keeping our eyes on the prize. Paul spoke of this prize of life lived through Christ, which grows us spiritually until the day of our resurrection. **Slide** Paul said, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV) Forget your old life, do not live in the past - you are a new creation in Christ and we are to now live in the present and the future at the same time. **Blank** It is because of God you are now alive spiritually – He saved you – you did not find Him, but He chose you. This can be seen in the life of Abraham. Did God look down from heaven and say, “Let’s see, perhaps I can find a man who has a little goodness in him and perhaps a little faith and from this I will build the father of my people. Did God search the earth and find Abraham because he possessed some good in him, perhaps a basis of faith and then God choose Abraham? God tells us that Abraham was no different from the rest of the people in Ur. In the Book of Joshua chapter 24 we learn that all the Chaldeans, including Abraham, worshipped other gods than the true God. The people of Ur did not know anything of the true God for they served the false gods given to people by the prince of this earth. God came to Abraham in a blaze of glory and filled Abraham with His spirit and Abraham immediately obeyed is what Stephen tells us

in Acts chapter 7. God always comes first and when God comes and speaks His spirit into a person then that person follows God. The Jews thought they had earned a special place in God's kingdom because they were the physical descendants of Abraham. But, the problem was that the Jews were not the spiritual descendants of Abraham – for if they had been the spiritual descendants of Abraham they would have embraced and believed in Jesus as the Christ. It is all about Jesus, His glory and His grace and not about man-made rituals and traditions. It can be difficult to let go of our past and embrace the future with Christ, but that is exactly what Christ calls us to do.

A new believer was having a hard time of letting go of his past. How could God love him when he consistently failed? He wanted to live for God but struggled. He came to his pastor and said, “No matter how much I pray, no matter how much scripture I read, no matter how hard I try, I cannot maintain my focus on Christ and I fail in weakness, my faith in Christ is not consistent. I am afraid I am losing my salvation.” As they sat in the pastor's living room, the pastor pointed to his dog lying by his feet. He said, “Do you see this dog? He is my dog. He is house trained, he never makes a mess, he is obedient and he is a faithful companion – he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen, as you can probably hear, is my baby, she makes a mess, sometimes throws her food, fouls her diapers and already I can see her sin nature. But who will inherit what I own, my kingdom? Certainly not my dog, but my child will inherit. You are the heir of our Lord Jesus; because it is for you He gave His life. We, you and I, are just like my child in the kitchen, a mess; we are not saved by our perfection, but by Jesus' mercy and grace. Jesus through the word of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will mold us into people of God by His power and grace.” As Paul the Beloved wrote, **Slide** “forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ

Jesus.” That man, is still spiritually growing, occasionally sinning, but pressing onward to the prize of Christ, pressing towards eternity. Every time he fails, every time the world inflicts upon him hurt, every time he falls, he gets back up and continues towards the day he will come before the mercy seat of God and be in the presence of his Lord forever. Is this how you are living? How you press on towards Christ in the way you live? **Blank**

Jesus continues in verse 26 speaking of spiritual life, “**For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.**” This verse reflects on verse 21 in that only God can give life and the Son can give life because He is God. Like the Father, Jesus has **life in Himself**. No one can give to others what they themselves lack. Sinful humans cannot give spiritual life to others for they have none themselves until God gives it. The power is not in the person, but in the name of Jesus and God’s holy Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Only God is the giver of life both physically and spiritually. Even Jesus, when He voluntarily gave up of His divine attributes and came to earth as we read in Philippians, **Slide** “**who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant (slave), and being made in the likeness of men.**” (Philippians 2:6-7 ESV) God the Father then granted Jesus His authority to give life, both physically and spiritually during Jesus’ self-limiting time on earth. **Blank** God plants life in the one He desires to have become His child. Because of the new life God gives, the person now hears the Word of God and believes. As the person grows in belief and faith he increasingly enters into the experiencing of God. At the moment God breaths spiritual life into a person they then begin to experience the future eternal state of living with God. If eternal life can be lost then it is not eternal. If our life in God through Christ can be taken from us, then it is not eternal. If a true believer can renounce God, then the

relationship was not eternal. Is God changeable? No, a thousand times, “No!” God does not withdraw His gifts. Those who claim to have been Christian and have denounced Jesus were in truth never a chosen child of God. When God gives Himself to a person and dwells in them as the Holy Spirit we can have total assurance of our spiritual resurrection and complete assurance of our coming physical resurrection. Look again in your bibles at our study passage in John chapter 5. Jesus made clear in verse 27 His authority and power, “**And he (God the Father) has given him (Jesus the Son) authority to execute judgment, because he (Jesus) is the Son of Man.**” Jesus is the true righteous judge.

Slide Second Resurrection

The Bible teaches that unbelievers will also experience a physical resurrection. However, since during their time here on earth they never experienced the spiritual resurrection given by God, they will be raised to face their final judgment before the Great White Throne. In keeping with their eternal judgment they will receive eternal resurrected bodies suited for their eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. I know it is not popular to speak of hell or eternal punishment by a just and righteous God. But, I say this, for those who ears to hear, hear the Word of God read from

Slide Revelation chapter 20 beginning in verse 11, “**Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.** ¹² **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.** ¹³ **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.** ¹⁴ **Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.** ¹⁵ **And if anyone’s**

name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20:11-15 ^{ESV}) Unbelievers experience a second death while believers experience eternity in the presence of God.

As sure as each one of us approaches death, it is only during our mortal lives that we can come to believe in Jesus by faith. **Slide** Please turn in your bibles to Romans

chapter 1. I will begin reading in verse 18. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man.” (Romans 1:18-23

^{ESV}) We have all known people like this, in fact, I used to be like this before God saved me. The sad truth is when we physically die there is no second chance. **Blank**

No amount of Novenas or offerings or prayers will buy ones way out of Hell. In what do we place our trust and faith in during our earthly lives – this is what makes the choice for our eternal destination. The funeral of the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev makes clear the price of this decision. Ronald Regan was president at the time of Brezhnev’s death and Vice-president George Bush flew to Moscow to represent the USA. The funeral was the formal event one would expect for a leader of the USSR. Mr. Bush related how at the end of the funeral he was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev’s widow, Viktoria. She stood motionless by the coffin throughout the funeral until seconds before it was closed. Then just as the

soldiers touched the lid, Viktoria performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts civil disobedience ever committed in the former USSR – she reached down and made the sign of the “cross” on her husband chest. There is the citadel of the secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had been in charge of it all, hoped that her husband was wrong. It was too late for him, but she hoped that there was another life, and that life was best represented by Jesus who died for the sins of the world on the “Cross”. We do not know what she believed at the time of her death, but that day Vice-president Bush saw hope.

Jesus wants his followers to live spiritually resurrected lives here on earth full of eternal hope. **Slide** “Flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.” (1 Timothy 6:11-12 ESV) I believe C. S. Lewis summed it up well, **Slide** “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.” Live spiritually and sojourn through this world sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ for you belong to the eternal world of heaven.

Slide Second Resurrection

Now back to our study passage where Jesus transitions from the first resurrection, which is spiritual to the second resurrection that is physical. Jesus warns people not to be surprised by this spiritual birth, He continues by saying, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his (Jesus’) voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who

have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” The world tries to define God in their terms, but history itself shows this has never worked. People, governments and cultures come and go, but God is the same forever. It is important to understand what Jesus is saying here. The subject of these verses is God’s judgment. God’s judgment establishes a permanent distinction between all people. Some enter into the fullness of eternal life and some into eternal death and damnation. Jesus wanted people to clearly understand this when in Matthew chapter seven He declared the difference between salvation and damnation, **Slide** “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14 ESV) The way of eternal salvation lays in Jesus’ way not the worlds. Jesus who was both fully God and fully man and **Slide** “who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin,” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV) is uniquely qualified as the ultimate judge of all mankind. **Blank**

In verse 28 Jesus is rebuking the Jews for their unbelief, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.” For if they believed - they would not marvel at His teaching but would have embraced them. Then Jesus dropped a “bomb”, a truth that would have shocked and astounded these Jews; He would one day raise the dead from their graves. As Jesus gives spiritual resurrection to believers He will give bodily resurrection and the hour is coming. At the time Jesus resurrects the dead – the righteous dead, who are in heaven with the Lord as written, **Slide** ⁶ “...We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8 ESV) The righteous who have died and are waiting for

Jesus' second coming are like the thief on the cross who Jesus said to, **Slide** "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42 ESV) On the other hand the wicked who have died are now in torment in Hades. We know this from Luke chapter 16 in the story told by Jesus of the rich man in Hades and Lazarus in the Abraham's bosom. Both the righteous and the wicked will receive bodies at Jesus' second coming. **Blank**

The Bible teaches that the dead are raised in a specific order, not all at the same time. Read with me in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 beginning in verse 22, **Slide** "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴ then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." Christ is the first fruits, for He overcame death by His resurrection. Next those who belong to Christ will be raised at His coming. These then are all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture.

Slide "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.**" (1

Thessalonians 4:16 ESV) Then the Old Testament saints, along with those saved

during the Tribulation. The prophet Daniels wrote, **Slide** "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." (Daniel 12:2 ESV) The Apostle John likewise

wrote in Revelation, **Slide** "Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand

years.” (Revelation 20:4 ^{ESV}) This then leaves those who will be resurrected to eternal damnation. **Blank**

Let me take a side comment about the thousand years mentioned in this verse and one that I will use in a moment. The thousand years can either be symbolic or actual. There are two main views concerning this. First, that the thousand years is symbolic and many who have this view believe that the “thousand years” began at Christ’s resurrection and is the time between His resurrection and His second coming, the period of time usually referred to as the “Church Age.” They have been given the label of “amillennialists”, though it is better to call it, more simply, “inaugurated millennialism.” The second, view is that the thousand years is actual and there will be a one thousand year reign of Christ here on earth and at the end of that time Satan is released from hades, defeated and he along with the beast and false prophet are cast in the lake of fire for eternity. These believers are given the title of “premillennialists” because Christ will come and then the millennium will begin. In our body we have both “amillennialists” and “premillennials” it is not sometime to divide over. I have avoided this for some time and am now making a commitment to study these in order that I can help our community understand them better. Let me return to what John wanted us to understand from this passage.

All of what the Apostle John wrote here, quoting our Lord Jesus was intended to make clear the destination of the righteous and the wicked, believers and unbelievers. Only believers enjoy the first resurrection that is spiritual. Reading from Revelation chapter 20, verse 6, **Slide** “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” What we believe and who we believe in is the most important question to be

answered in this life. You may have answered this question, but what about the lost? What about those who are your biological family, those you work with and those God put in your life's path so that you will share the gospel of Christ, the gospel of eternal life? **Slide** What will you do?