

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. ✠

The resurrection of the sons in Nain and Zarephath, the sons of the widows, is a promise to us. The promise is that we will get our loved ones back. What happens to her is symptomatic; that is typical of what happens to all Christians. Jesus lives; whoever believes in him never dies. Those widows get their sons back early, but in some sense, the miracle is simply speeding up time. What they get, we all get. This is the promise that is made to the church. Jesus lives, and no one who believes in him ever dies, and the resurrection of the body is the most sure and certain thing in all of creation. The culmination and the goal, the final effect of the ascension. This is the way that our lord Jesus Christ silences the Sadducees.

If you remember, in Matthew 22, they come to him with a ridiculous story about a woman who marries 7 brothers who all die, and then they ask who she will be married to. Jesus answers and says, "You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God". He says this because they deny the resurrection. He says "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead have you not read what was spoken to you by god?" Saying "I am the god of Abraham, the god of Issac and of Jacob, God is not the god of the dead but the living". And from that day forward the Sadducees asked him no more questions.

Abraham is most certainly not dead, neither is Issac or Jacob. Our god is the god of the living, and if they live, then so also the son of the widow of Nain and Zarephath. So also, all of the faithful who have gone with the sign of faith, who fell asleep in Jesus, believing in His promises and waiting for the revelation to come. What happens to those widows will happen to you! Do you not know the scriptures or the power of God? How dare you deny it.

But some find this statement about being like angels of God in heaven disturbing; some, in a romantic or sentimental mode, will say, "I want to be married in heaven". But the reality is that in heaven we will be confirmed in bliss like the holy angels, and we will no longer procreate, which is the primary reason and gift God gives to Holy Marriage.

So what is the point of being like the angels? It doesn't mean your memory is destroyed or that you will not have any affection for your loved ones here on earth. Rather, you will be pure, you will love your loved ones without envy, bitterness, or regret, you will be confirmed and at one with the will of God, so you can love them as Jesus loves them.

There is no reason in this passage to think that you won't remember them. That in fact what you love about them won't be the way they loved you on earth, as you know now the good works that follow them. In fact there is every reason to believe that you will remember them better than you do now. You will actually know their good works, and you will rejoice in them, even things you are unaware of now or take for granted. You will sing the praise of, and so will the whole company of heaven.

So it is that even as the Sadducees were silenced by this reality, so the old man in us must likewise be silenced. We must fight against the doubts that creep up in our own fallen minds. With the word of God and with prayer, we must believe in the Scriptures and in the power of God.

The grave has lost its victory even though it seems to retain it for a moment. Death and hell have no claim upon us and we do not mourn as those without hope. St. Paul writes "I do not want you to be ignorant brethren about those who have fallen asleep". It is not unusual, strange or impious for you to be concerned about your loved ones who have fallen asleep in faith. Paul says he does not want you to be ignorant about them. Which is to say I want you to know about them! I want you to know the fate, the promise, the future that Jesus has promised them. Lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will in no way precede those who are asleep. For the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with a trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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 thus we shall always be with the Lord; therefore, comfort one another with these words.

We believe that the dead in Christ will rise first. When the widow in Zarephath asks Elijah if he has come to remind her of her sin and to kill her son, in some way, the answer to both is yes. That he has, in fact, come for this purpose, she needs to be reminded of her sin and be reminded of her mortality, and for her son to be raised, he must first die. No one gets out of the Church militant alive. There must be a passage through death in the way of Christ, so that we might be called out of the tomb. Not like Lazarus or the sons of these widows, but as Jesus himself.

Either you will go through the passage of death or you will suffer the horrors of the tribulation at the end, but in any case, at the end, you will be changed. The dead in Christ will rise first, getting the first honor even as these widows' sons were, and then those still alive will be perfected in their bodies and join the resurrection according to the word of Christ.

There will be one church in Jesus Christ, and everyone will get their loved ones who have departed in the faith back. There will be a reunion in heaven, not only with Jesus Christ, but with all of his church. We do not know the times or seasons for these things. We do not know if we ourselves will go through the passage of death, but we know that his ways are not our ways; we know that, left to our decision and our sinful flesh, we would not face death, but it is not given to us to decide, nor does strength come apart from resistance.

We know that we are sinners, and yet we are baptized; we know Christ was crucified, yet he lives. We know the scriptures, and we know the power of God because we know that Jesus lives.

✠ In Jesus' Name. Amen. ✠