

The Gates of Hell could not stop Jesus from preaching eternal life

written by Alfred Persson | October 14, 2024



Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice (Jn. 5:28 NKJ)

I'm not a story teller, but this is a great story. So I had ChatGPT write it. Its great, better than I can do:

Imagine the scene: Jesus, the Messiah, stands before the scribes and Pharisees, who are plotting His death. They believe that if they can just silence His voice—if they can put Him to death—they will stop His message, prevent Him from gaining followers, and protect their own influence. Yet Jesus speaks with confidence and authority, declaring something that must have left His enemies stunned. He tells them not to marvel, for the day is coming when even those in their graves will hear His voice.

Jesus knew they were seeking to kill Him because He healed on the Sabbath and called God His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:16-18). But in response, He didn't back down. Instead, He boldly proclaimed His divine authority: *"As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will" (John 5:21).*

Jesus was not only claiming the power to heal the sick and raise the dead—He was claiming something far greater. He was declaring that even after death, His voice would not be silenced.

This is where the heart of Christ's "boast" comes to light. The Pharisees could plot, and they could carry out their plans to crucify Him. They could stop His earthly ministry, but they could not stop His mission. Even after His death, Jesus would continue to preach, not to the living, but to the dead. This is what He foretold when He said, *"Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice" (John 5:28).*

The message of eternal life was unstoppable. Even after Jesus was laid in the tomb, His voice would be heard by those who had already passed from this life. Scripture reveals that during the three days He was in the grave, He descended into the depths, to the "spirits in prison," and preached to them (1 Peter 3:19). These were the dead who had never had the chance to hear His message of salvation during their earthly lives. Yet, through His death and resurrection, Jesus was extending the reach of His gospel beyond the boundaries of the living.

The apostle Peter confirms this when he writes, *"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6).*

Even in death, the message of life persisted, reaching the souls in the grave, offering them a chance to hear and believe.

This fulfills Jesus' promise that His authority was not confined to the living alone. He had the power to give life to whomever He willed—those who were physically alive and those who were already dead. The Pharisees thought that death would be the end of Him, but in fact, His mission would only intensify. As Ephesians says, *"He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:9-10).*

Christ's descent into the grave was not a defeat—it was part of His victory over death itself.

Jesus' declaration that all in the graves would hear His voice speaks to the grand scope of His redemptive work. As the Father has life in Himself, He gave the Son the power to bring life, even from the depths of the grave. This is not merely about the final judgment, as some commentators suggest. It is about the work Christ accomplished in the grave during the three days of His death, preaching life even to the dead.

The boast of Christ is clear: Death could not silence Him. The Pharisees could not prevent Him from fulfilling His mission. Even when they thought

they had won by crucifying Him, Jesus would go on to preach to the dead, making them alive by His word. His victory over death was absolute, and the gates of hell would never prevail against Him.

Christ's voice continues to call out, even beyond the grave, offering life to all who will hear Him. His message of eternal life is one that death cannot stop. As Jesus proclaimed in John 5, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life"* (John 5:24).* This promise of life is offered to all—both the living and the dead—because Christ's power and authority know no limits.

This is the good news that Christians hold onto: The power of Jesus' voice, the life He offers, extends beyond this life and into eternity. Death could not hold Him, and it cannot hold those who believe in Him. He is the resurrection and the life, and His voice will be heard by all, even those in the graves, as He leads His people from death to life everlasting.