

## John, Part 45: "I AM the Resurrection and the Life"

**John 11:17 ESV** Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, **19** and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. **20** So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **23** Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24** Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "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?" **27** She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

- I. When Jesus was told that his friend Lazarus was sick unto death, he waited to go and be with him and his family. The reason given for this delay (John 11:5-6), was that Jesus **loved** Lazarus and his sisters. Last week we discussed the absurdity of that statement from a human perspective. Hopefully by the time we concluded, you began to understand God's working in our suffering and his deliverance. He uses both for our benefit; that we may see and experience his glory and believe in Christ.
  - A. Today, we are going to look at the 5th of Jesus' 7 "I AM" statements in the book of John; as well as the 7th and final miraculous sign which testified to Christ's true identity as Israel's Messiah, and the Savior of the world.
  - B. Christ and the disciples have finally arrived outside Bethany (on the outskirts of Jerusalem), the home of Lazarus and his sisters. Lazarus is now not only dead, but he has been buried for 4 days. Jesus missed the healing and the funeral!
    1. This time frame is significant. According to some "later Jewish sources", some held a belief "that the soul hovered over the body for three days, hoping to reenter it, but then gave up and departed". (ESV Study Bible).
    2. If Mary and Martha, or others present held to this belief, the 4th day would indicate the end of hope. The spirit had flown. There was only room for despair at this point. Jesus had missed his opportunity to turn things around.
  - C. When Martha goes out to meet Jesus, her first words show her disappointment and sense of abandonment; maybe even a sense that Jesus had betrayed her. All of this is summed up in the words uttered by Martha and later by her sister Mary as well. "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**"
  - D. Has you ever felt this way? You needed Jesus, and he never showed. I wonder how many of you feel this way even now. When we feel this kind of disillusionment, we begin to dictate to Jesus what should have or would have happened, had he only responded like we wanted or expected.
    1. It's easy for us to get caught in a spiral of vain imagination about how God **could have** fixed our marriages, our bodies, our jobs, our children, etc. "if he had been there". But that assertion presupposes that we understand the workings of the infinite God; and that simply is not so!
    2. **1 Corinthians 2:11b ESV** "...no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

- E. But Martha does something that is paradoxical. In her devastation because Jesus has yet to move on her behalf, she takes one last stab at faith. **“But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”**
1. Martha’s faith is persistent. It doesn’t matter that it has been more than 3 days! Jesus is standing before her and she will not miss the opportunity to make another appeal to him. She still sees Jesus as the one who is able to bring about a desired end (and that is commendable), but what Jesus wants to awaken her to the fact that Jesus himself *is* the desired end.
    - a) Martha is modeling a beautiful attitude that says, “Jesus can do anything...**even now**, at this late stage of the game.”
    - b) But it is not enough to know that Jesus **can** do anything, if you have not settled in your mind that **whatever he chooses to do or not do** is good, beneficial and superior to anything we think we need.
  2. Both Martha and Mary had no doubt of Jesus’ power and ability. If they had, they wouldn’t have sent for him in the first place. Martha wouldn’t have made her second appeal now that he was there now.
    - a) But while they were convinced of his power, they did not yet fully believe (trust in, cling to, and rely on) his person.
    - b) In other words, they didn’t yet know that Jesus Christ himself was enough for them.
- F. But Jesus looks right at Martha and says something that would have made her swell with faith 5 days ago, and should have had the same effect on her even now. **“Your brother will rise again.”**
1. Pay careful attention to the mix of faith and unbelief in Martha’s heart. She sent for Jesus, knowing that a single word would set her brother free from his sickness, and fend off death. When he was late, she made a 2nd appeal, hoping that he would graciously grant her petition and raise her brother.
  2. But when Jesus gives her a promise of resurrection, her focus shifts from being in the “now”, to some future fulfillment in the distance.
    - a) **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”** She expresses faith in a coming day when “all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out” (John 5:28-28).
    - b) This is a good thing for all of us to remember. No matter what healing or deliverance God chooses to grant us in this life, we must never forget that all such blessings in this life are temporary; serving as a reminder of a coming day when we will be permanently healed, delivered and saved.
- G. But Martha’s unbelief is shown when she is fearful to trust that Jesus is sufficient for her **present** need. In other words, sometimes our looking to the “sweet by and by”, and expression of faith in a future reality, is merely a mask for unbelief in the present, wonder-working ability of the Lord Jesus!
- II. **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever *believes in me*, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and *believes in me* shall never die. **Do you believe this?**”**
- A. Here is the glorious 5th “I AM” statement of John’s gospel. 5 times now, with 2 more to come, we have heard Jesus declare in the Greek “Ego Eimi” - I AM tying himself to God’s divinity: “I AM the Bread of Life”, “I AM the Light of the World”, “I

AM the Door of the sheep”, “I AM the Good Shepherd” and now, in glorious answer to the dear sister’s need, “I AM the resurrection and the Life”!

1. To understand this, you must understand what Jesus is **not** saying. He’s not saying, “I will bring about or cause the resurrection”, but rather, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life”.

a) In chapter 10, he said he was the “Good Shepherd” who gives “abundant life” to his sheep. Now we see that the life that he gives **abundantly** is the very essence of himself, because he **is** the life!

b) **Galatians 2:20 ESV** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me**. And **the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2. This means that if we are regenerated by the Spirit, that the lives we live in the world are really Jesus living his life through us!

a) This is easier to understand when you know the Greek word translated as “in” twice in this passage (“believes **in** me”). It is **eis** (ace).

b) It is often translated “into”, as opposed to “in”. Re-read the passage with that in mind: “Whoever **believes into me**, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and **believes into me** shall never die.”

3. Resurrection from the dead, and the resulting eternal life, being truly reconciled to God; all of these things are impossible except through Jesus. He is literally the embodiment of both resurrection and life and both can be found only by fulling coming **into** Christ, and by extension, out of ourselves. Jesus is the path to real life, and an end to death!

B. He is the Resurrection and the Life! So for a Christian, resurrection is not an event, it’s a person; and the resulting life is not something I live but something that is lived through me. It is to this that Martha declares belief when she says, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

III. **John 11:28 ESV** When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” **29** And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. **30** Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. **31** When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. **32** Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” **33** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. **34** And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” **35** Jesus wept. **36** So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” **37** But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

A. Mary, having come to Jesus, now goes through a very similar dance of disappointment and grasping for a single shred of faith, just as her sister had.

1. But unlike Martha, she is not alone. She has brought with her crowd of mourners that will be inadvertent spectators of what is about to happen.

2. More accurately, the grieving Jews that followed Mary may have been incidental to **Mary's** plans, but they were clearly a part of **Christ's** plan to display God's Glory in the middle of their suffering.
  - B. This is one of the best arguments to believe steadfastly, trust fearlessly and suffer faithfully: someone is always watching! I never want to be an obstacle to someone's clear view of the glory of God, because I was standing in the way.
  - C. Look what happened when Jesus noticed the weeping crowd. The text says he was "deeply moved" and "greatly troubled". This has been bothersome to some people for a couple of reasons:
    1. First, Jesus knew what was about to transpire. Why would he be "greatly troubled"? Does this indicate doubt on his part? Was he not really in control?
    2. Second, the Greek word translated "deeply moved" can actually (and frequently) indicate **anger**. Was Jesus mad at the situation, or even at those who stood there mourning, including Mary and Martha?
  - D. When you couple the phrase "deeply moved" (which will appear again in verse 38), with "greatly troubled", you get clear evidence that Jesus was heavily and emotionally involved with what is happening. This is further proven by the shortest verse in all of scripture, which we just read, verse 35: **"Jesus wept."**
    1. We don't know exactly what Jesus was feeling, but three possibilities have been suggested in the notes of the ESV Study Bible:
      - a) "Jesus was moved with profound sorrow at the death of his friend and at the grief that his other friends had suffered."
      - b) "this sorrow was intermixed with anger...at the evil of death" Which Paul called "the final enemy" in 1 Corinthians 15. Death was the enemy, upon whom Jesus would deal the final blow in just a few days from this story.
      - c) Jesus also had "a deep sense of awe at the power of God that was about to flow through him to triumph over death."
    2. All of these emotions were at play in Jesus to the point of tears, and you and I should take great comfort in that fact. Jesus is not distant. The writer of Hebrews says that he can be "touched" with the feelings of our weaknesses.
- IV. **John 11:38 ESV** Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **39** Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." **43** When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." **44** The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."
- A. When Jesus arrives at the tomb, knowing exactly what he intends to do, we find that his emotions have not abated. Once again we read that he was "deeply moved".
  - B. Standing before this cave that has been converted to a tomb, Jesus gives a clear instruction: **"Take away the stone."** Martha (the practical one from Luke 10)

protests! “Jesus, you realize my brother has been dead for 4 days, right? It doesn’t exactly smell like a bed of roses in there! Respectable people like me would never unseal a grave! It’s against propriety, tradition and good taste!”

1. Some of you here today are still rotting away because you won’t remove the stone from the grave that your life has become. You think by trying to stay under the radar, you can mask the stink that is oozing out of your soul.
2. But if you would have a new life, you have to take away the stone and expose what’s really inside - the rot, the decay, the stench - you must reveal all of it to Jesus (He knows what’s inside anyway!). Stop pretending that you are more holy or wise than you really are, less sinful and needy than you really are. Those games will never get you anywhere with God.

C. “Did I not tell you that **if you believed** you would see the glory of God?” For faith to bear fruit some kind of believing action is required. Always.

1. Suppose you felt like you had a cold coming on and so you call your doctor to make an appointment. After describing your symptoms over the phone, he informs you that you don’t need to come in, but that he will phone in a prescription for you. He tells you exactly what he wants you to take; how much, and how often.
2. A number of things had to happen: First, you had to believe that the person you were talking to was actually your doctor who could help, even though you couldn’t see him. You were required to listen to his voice as he told you how to fix your problem.
  - a) You could have simply laid in your bed, meditating. You could have thought, “What a great thing to have a doctor who understands my problems and was willing to provide me with a solution!” But simply lying around thinking about how the doctor shared good words wouldn’t help! You’d still be lying there sick, even if you had felt nice about the doctor!
  - b) You have to do something. Get up. Go to Walgreen’s and say to the pharmacist, “Do you have a prescription with my name on it?” There’s a lot of medicine at Walgreen’s - but you need something that the doctor has ordered for you, and only you, specifically. The doctor told you it was there, so you believed his word, acted on it, and went to Walgreen’s.
3. Now taking that medicine home and staring at the bottle, and considering how medicinally helpful it could be wouldn’t help you one bit, would it? The doctor said, “Take this much, in this manner, and you will be well.”

D. Can I say that many people show up to church to hear what the Dr. Jesus has to say? They think about how good and wise he is. They think about how beautiful and effective his medicine is, but they remain sick in their souls, minds and bodies because they won’t ingest the prescription of the word by acting on it.

V. Have you noticed how much this story is about believing? Jesus tell the disciples in verse 15 that he delayed going to Lazarus so that they may believe. Jesus tells Martha that the one who believes into him will live, even if he dies. He says that the one who lives, and believes, will never die. Now he challenges Martha to remove the stone, reminding her that belief is the door to seeing the glory of God.

A. So, fighting their deepest intuition, they remove the stone. Now for the 7th sign of John... Jesus begins to pray. “**Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew**

that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, **that they may believe** that you sent me.”

- B. There it is again! The whole purpose for this dramatic display - from Christ's delay and lack of urgency, to his disciples' misunderstanding of his mission, to Martha and Mary's despair, even the reason Lazarus' sickness and pre-mature death was for one purpose alone - **that they might believe!**
    - 1. Standing before the tomb, a rotting corpse inside, the smell of death wafting through the air, confused and offended mourners standing around with mouths agape, Jesus cries out in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out!"
    - 2. And as the words came out of Christ's mouth, a rush of air filled the dead man's lungs, dead muscle began to expand and contract, and blood that had been clotted in his veins, begins to flow freely once again. He is alive!
  - C. He gets up, bound head to toe, mummy style, and shuffles to the entrance of the cave, responding to a familiar and beloved voice. He hears that voice say to those at the tomb, **"Unbind that man and let him go!"**
- VI. Why the emphasis on belief in this story? Because this story is Jesus' divine foreshadowing of a much more significant resurrection that was literally only days away. Next week we'll see how the resurrection of Lazarus set the wheels in motion leading to Jesus brutal execution. But that event was not out of Christ's sight, nor his control. What he did in Bethany proved that he was the Lord even over death. Witnesses of this miracle would soon see him obey the Father, even dying on the cross, only to raised by the Spirit three days later, and then crowned Lord of all.
- A. The disciples are learning to believe that he is so much more than a carpenter, a teacher, a miracle worker, a trouble-maker. He was the I AM. this kind of belief doesn't come cheap. Miracles must be waited for. Pain, heartbreak and suffering must be endured; all so we can learn to trust not a power, but a Person; not an event, but an Exalted Lord, not a rescue, but a Rescuer.
  - B. Robert Chesebrough was the chemist who invented Vaseline Petroleum Jelly from rod wax, the ooze that forms on shafts of oil rigs in the 1870's. He so believed in its healing properties, that he became his own guinea pig.
    - 1. In demonstrations, he would burn himself with flames and acid; he cut and scratched himself so deep and so often that he bore the scars of his testing for the rest of his life. But people only had to look at his wounds, now healed, to know that the product worked-but also the extent of his belief!
    - 2. Do you bear scars that display the extent of your belief? Have you borne up, waiting for miracles because you were more interested in seeing the glory of God revealed in the Son of God, than achieving temporary relief?
  - C. His delay is not so you might believe in resurrection or eternal life, but rather that you might come to know that he is the resurrection and the life, and there is no other.
  - D. The question that the Holy Spirit is asking each one of us this morning is the same question posed to Martha: "Do you believe this?"