

**I AM the Resurrection and the Life**  
**John 11:1–46**  
**December 21, 2025**

One of the primary reasons we’re considering these “I AM” statements is that we thought it would connect well with what we *just* considered in Exodus—at the burning bush when God revealed Himself as “I AM” (Ex. 3:14). It connects, in part, because John’s Gospel is soaked with Exodus. It mentions Moses in the prologue, previewing the constant quotes and allusions ahead. And *eventually*, as the Gospel goes on, the One who came to make God known (Jn. 1:18)—uses I AM language to refer to Himself—repeatedly.

So, *one* of the reasons we decided to do this study was the connection to our study in Exodus. But *another* reason is that *each* of these “I AM” statements concern “life” in one way or another.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, “I AM the bread of life” has to do with life. And if you recall, the “light of the world” leads to the light *of life* (Jn. 8:12). Then, the “Door” in John 10 came that we might have “life” (Jn. 10:10). And what you *just* considered at 9:00 AM is that the sheep *live* because the Good Shepherd lays *down* His “life” (Jn. 10:11). Wednesday night we’ll consider the statement from John 14: **I am the way, and the truth, and the life** (Jn. 14:6). And this morning He is the Resurrection and the Life.

Of course, John previewed this emphasis in the prologue of his Gospel, coming out of the gates in 1:4, writing: **In Him was life**. Which is right at the essence of the message of Christ’s arrival. He came, and *lived*, in order that His people might live. And it’d be hard to think of a better narrative that portrays the life God put on flesh to give than John 11.

**1. Jesus, Life, and the Disciples (vv. 1–16)**

John 11 begins: **Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha**. It’s possible we’re *more* aware of these sisters in Luke’s Gospel, because of the story that portrays Martha running around and Mary at Jesus’s feet. These are the same sisters in John 11. Verse 2 tells us that this Mary **was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair**. That sounds just like her.

Mary and Martha lived in Bethany with their brother Lazarus. And at this point he’s sick. Verse 3: **So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold he whom You love is sick.”** Jesus loves Lazarus. His affection for this family will be emphasized once again in verse 5. But, first, note his response to the news of Lazarus’s illness in verse 4: **But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”**

Whatever else happens in this chapter, John tells us what it’s intended to portray: the glory of God in the Son. So, as we walk through John 11, it’s key to keep verse 4 in mind. This sickness is for the glory of God, and more specifically, that **the Son of God may be glorified by it** (v. 4).

And though Christ’s glory is absolutely centered on God, that does not mean it has nothing to do with His people. Verse 5: **Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus**. Verse 3 already told us that Jesus loves Lazarus. But it’s *almost* as if John *reminds* us in verse 5 so that we do *not* misunderstand what happens in verse 6: **So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was**. Verse 5 makes impossible *any* notion that Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> See Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 59.

stayed because He did not love.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the “so” in verse 6 *links* His affection for them *with* the fact that He didn’t immediately rush to them.<sup>3</sup>

To understand what happens next, we need a little reminder about context. At the end of chapter 10, after Jesus called Himself both the Door and the Good Shepherd of the sheep, He tells many of the Jewish people around Him that they are *not* part of His flock. And then He dared to assert this about Himself: **I and the Father are one** (Jn. 10:30). What did they do when they heard that assertion? They picked up stones (10:31), accusing Him of blasphemy, of claiming to be God (10:33).

Yet Jesus eludes their grasp and went away beyond the Jordan (10:39–40). That’s some context. And just because Jesus wasn’t killed in John 10 doesn’t mean the danger went away. Hear verse 7: **Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?”** Verse 9: **Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”**

Before they had clocks or watches, both the Romans and the Jews considered days in 12-hour increments.<sup>4</sup> Because, generally, that’s how long the light shines. For that world, those twelve hours were pivotal hours, hours you could get things done. With that in mind, after the disciples ask the Lord *why* He’d go back to Judea, He asks, **Are there not twelve hours in the day?** Jesus knows *precisely* the hour. And though the sun might be going down—metaphorically—He won’t quit working until it’s dark.

So, what’s the work He aims to do? Verse 11: **This He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.”** Jesus already knows what’s happened. However, the disciples, clearly, do not. Verse 12, **“Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”** You probably know this, but the word “cemetery” comes from a Greek word that means “sleeping place.” Early Christians chose that word for a place of burial because they believed death for a Christian was *like* falling asleep. Jesus agreed.

The disciples did not seem to grasp this. Or at the least they misunderstood Jesus. So, John tells us what Jesus meant in verse 13: **Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”**

I might point out: Jesus knew that when he said Lazarus was “asleep.” And Jesus knew Lazarus would *die* when He said back in verse 4: **this sickness is not to end in death.**

And what Jesus says next, *if* heard in isolation, is quite jarring. Verse 14: **Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there.** Though Lazarus no longer lives, the One who gives life was glad that He was *not* there to do anything about it. Why? Verse 15 answers: **so that you may believe.**

We’ve talked a *little* about how the signs in John’s Gospel often correspond with the “I AM” statements. That certainly was the case with the bread of life in John 6. It’s also the case here. Many would call what’s ahead the seventh sign in John’s Gospel, even going so far as calling it the climactic sign.<sup>5</sup> With that in mind, I remind us again why John included *these* in particular. John tells us in chapter 20: . . . **many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that**

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 539.

<sup>3</sup> However you look at the days and the distance, it’s quite likely Lazarus dies before Jesus makes it to him anyways. See Morris, 540 or D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, 408.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, 408.

<sup>5</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters*, 228.

**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name** (Jn. 20:31).

Which is *precisely* what Jesus just said. Lazarus is dead. He's glad He wasn't there. And He's glad for the *disciples'* sake—so that they might believe. And we might add, based on John 20, that by believing they might have life.

Jesus knows what time it is. So, He continues, at the end of verse 15: **but let us go to Him.** And rather than Peter speaking up for the group, another disciple does: **Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”**

What does *this* have to do with life? Leon Morris answers, “Thomas looked death in the face and chose death with Jesus rather than life without Him.”<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Jesus, Life, and Martha (vv. 17–27)

Jesus told the disciples He'd go to Lazarus. Verse 17: **So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.**<sup>7</sup> Then, verses 18 and 19 continue to set the scene: **Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.**

The distance between Jerusalem and Bethany wasn't all that far. Because of that, many had come to comfort the family. And, because of that, it wouldn't have been hard for the sisters to hear updates concerning who was on their way. Verse 20: **Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give you.”**

Some have taken Martha's words as something of a rebuke. I'm with those that think, instead, it's a statement of faith.<sup>8</sup> She confesses that whatever Jesus asks of God, God gives. So, *if* He'd been there, according to Martha, Lazarus would still be as well.

Then, in verse 23, in what one man calls, “planned ambiguity,” Jesus responds: **Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”** Clearly not knowing *all* that Jesus referred to, Martha responds in verse 24: **I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.**

In one sense, Martha's *not* wrong. Jesus doesn't correct that aspect of her statement. However, in another sense, she's *still* not grasping what He'd just said to her. So, finally, we arrive at the “I AM” statement in John 11. Verse 25: **Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.”**

Jesus aims to move Martha from a general and abstract belief into a personalized one.<sup>9</sup> He's leading her to believe not *just* in an abstract resurrection, but in Him. Because it's not *only* that God gives resurrection, the One in front of Martha *is* that resurrection.

If I might quickly connect this to one of the “I AM” statements in Exodus, recall there what God said from the bush. Yahweh said to Moses, **I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.** Note that He *didn't* say, “I *was*” their God. Even though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been long gone, from the bush God says “I am”—present tense—their God. How might *that* be possible? How could He *still* be the God of men who'd been dead for hundreds of years? Because He's the God of the living.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Morris, 545.

<sup>7</sup> Why does John tell us this? For a number of reasons, but also to set up what Martha will say in verse 39.

<sup>8</sup> Morris, 548. See Carson, 412.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, 412.

<sup>10</sup> And they weren't dead. See Matthew 22 and Luke 20 for this interpretation.

He's always given life to His people. And in John 11, Jesus wants Martha to see this truth—not in mere abstraction but personally. And He wants her to see it as not *merely* future, but as present.<sup>11</sup> Because He is not *only* resurrection, He is also life.

The balance of verses 25 and 26 explain what He means. First, verse 25b: **he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.** That means, in part, what Martha already declared was true. Even if someone dies, the one who believes in Christ *will* live. That's more future oriented.

However, verse 26 flips the phrasing in order to point to the now: **and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.** In other words, the One that *already* enjoys the life He gives now will never cease to enjoy it.<sup>12</sup>

So, while, yes, the gospel is concerned with the future, that does not mean it's not concerned with the present. He came—John 10—that we **may have life, and have it abundantly** (Jn. 10:10). Next week we'll consider the truth from John 15 that He is the Vine and we are the branches (Jn. 15). He is the source of life. Then, a couple chapters later—in John 17—the One speaking here will pray that His life might be ours (17:23). What happens when He gives us *His* life? Paul would say it this way: **Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God** (Gal. 2:20). As we believe, we live. Because the One in whom we believe *is* life.

And then Jesus asks Martha a question I ask us, at the end of verse 26: **Do you believe this?**

In verse 27, Martha answers, **She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed.”** The verb tense for “believe” is worth pointing out. Because it's in a tense that communicates faith at some point in the past; and, yet, a faith that persisted into the present. Her faith *began*; and her faith *continued*.<sup>13</sup> That's not to say it did so perfectly, but it *is* to say she believed. And then she believed again. And day by day, she *kept* believing.

She said, **Yes, Lord; I have believed.** And, further, she had not believed something vague, whatever she wanted to believe.<sup>14</sup> Her faith had a certain content. Verse 27 again: **She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”**

Martha believed that Jesus was **the Christ**. That is, He's the Messiah Israel waited centuries upon centuries for. He's the One they'd expected to come, to arrive, the One the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to.

But, alongside that, she believed that He was **the Son of God**. In a few moments, Jesus will call God, “Father.” He'd just said, **I and the Father are one** (Jn. 10:30). Martha believes, and *has* been believing, in this unique relationship between the Father and the One begotten by Him (Jn. 1:18).

Martha believed that He was the Christ, that He was the Son of God, and then—significant for our purposes today—that Jesus is **even He who comes into the world**. She believes that He is the One *sent* out of heaven (Jn. 6) by the Father to accomplish His purposes, light into the darkness (1:9), the Word made flesh (1:14).

So, when I ask the question again, I ask it with *that* in mind: **Do you believe this?**

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<sup>11</sup> Morris, 550.

<sup>12</sup> Carson, 413.

<sup>13</sup> Perfect tense. See Morris, 551.

<sup>14</sup> Morris, 551.

### 3. Jesus, Life, and Mary (vv. 28–35)

Verse 28: **When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.** Mary does what Martha did back in verse 20.

Then John gives us even *more* of the setting in verse 30: **Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.** Why’s John telling us this? I’m sure there are *more* reasons than this, but he wants us to know that all that comes about comes about before a crowd.

This is certainly the Mary we know in verse 32: **Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet.** Then, using almost the exact same phrase as her sister,<sup>15</sup> she speaks in verse 32: **“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”**

Verse 32 tells us *where* Mary was—at Jesus’s feet. But it *didn’t* tell us what she was doing there. Verse 33 does: **When Jesus therefore saw her weeping.**

She’s not alone. Verse 33 continues: **When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.** This is the scene. Mary’s weeping at Jesus’s feet. The crowd around them is weeping. Jesus is **deeply moved in spirit**. There’s no light emotion described here.<sup>16</sup>

But don’t miss this. John also says that Jesus is **troubled**, a term often used to describe indignation.<sup>17</sup> Being deeply moved, and troubled, He asks in verse 34: **“Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”**

And then verse 35: **Jesus wept.** Now, whatever we do with this section, we must keep in mind that Jesus’s inner life was one of perfect balance and proportion—<sup>18</sup> *nothing* out of control. He’s deeply moved in His spirit, troubled, and weeping. And *all* of it is perfectly righteous.

A lot of debate on this passage concerns how it can be all three? Commentators wonder, “Can one be affected deeply, angry, and sad all at *once*?” Is that possible? Maybe a better question is: “Have you lived?”

It’s entirely possible that Jesus being troubled includes His being angry at death. I think He hates it. He hates it to the degree that He put on a body in order to defeat it. He hates death. And in this chapter, people He loves are grieving it.

That’s *some* of what’s going on here. That’s part of why He’s **deeply moved** in spirit. But it’s also entirely possible that Jesus is **troubled** by some of the unbelieving responses of those around Mary and Martha.

Further, it’s entirely consistent with His character that He grieves the pain of a groaning creation upon these sisters He loved. And He wept. He’s near the brokenhearted.

Verse 36: **So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”**

*Could* He have?

Christ didn’t come merely to *postpone* death.

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<sup>15</sup> Carson, 415.

<sup>16</sup> Morris, 556.

<sup>17</sup> Carson, 415; Morris, 556.

<sup>18</sup> See B. B. Warfield, “On the Emotional Life of Our Lord.” And Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 105.

#### 4. Jesus, Life, and Lazarus (vv. 38–46)

Verse 38: **So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Remove the stone.”** Then, entirely in character, Martha speaks. Verse 39: **“Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.”**

And Jesus responds. It seems likely that John remembers this question because Jesus had already hinted at it in verse 4. Verse 40: **Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”**

At Jesus’s question, Martha must have acquiesced. Verse 41: **So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank you that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent me.”** To see what happens next *rightly*, we’re to believe that the Father sent His Son. That God Himself took upon Himself humanity, so that He might come for a people.

Verse 43: **When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”**

Verse 44: **The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”**

The Resurrection called. The One who is life woke him up.

Earlier in this gospel, John wrote: **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory** (Jn. 1:14).

Might we see at least three things:

First, that Lazarus walked out of that tomb *so that* we might believe God sent His Son.

Second, might we see what John 11 previews. In a few chapters, John and Peter will run together to a *different* tomb on a Sunday morning, where a different stone was rolled away, and they saw different linen wrappings, and a different face—cloth.

Third, might we see the life given in the Gospel. *Apart* from Christ, are we less dead than this man?

Or *with* Christ, are we less alive?

After this sign, verse 45 tells us that many believed. Yet verse 46 tells us that some didn’t.

What about us? Have we believed that He is the Christ, the Son of God, **even He who comes into the world?**

#### Conclusion

He lived so that we might live. Because it’s not *just* that He *gives* life. It’s not *just* that in Him *was* life (Jn. 1:4). He *gives* life, in Him *was* life, because He *is* life.

So, if you’re in Christ, live—live by faith in the Son of God.

And if you’re *not* in Christ, Life calls. Believe. Hear Him. Come out of the tomb.