

The Resurrection and the Life

Jesus is... Series

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Death is an event that we are all too familiar with. A common belief held by many is that death represents the ultimate culmination of one's existence.

However, this is not what the bible teaches.

The scriptures teach that it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgement.

The concept of judgment after death emphasizes that physical death is not the end of existence.

It also reminds us that we must all account before the creator for the lives we have led and the decisions we have made, particularly in relation to Christ and his mission.

Today, we'll look at the fifth of seven "I am" declarations made by Jesus in the Gospel of John about who He was and what He came to achieve.

John 11:25-26 (NKJV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Jesus made this statement when he arrived in Bethany and was received by Martha, who was overcome with grief for her brother Lazarus' death.

Not only was she filled with grief, but she and her sister Mary were confused as to why Jesus had not arrived right away after they sent out messengers a few days earlier notifying him that Lazarus was ill.

Let's begin the story from verse one.

John 11:1-3 (NLT) A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. ² This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. ³ So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

We don't know what ailment attacked Lazarus, but it was serious enough for his sisters to send messengers to Jesus, pleading with Him to come immediately and heal him.

I am confident that the sisters had no doubts that Jesus would arrive, as he never turned down a request for healing or deliverance, not even for strangers. If he cured strangers, he would most certainly come to heal and deliver a close friend.

However, this would not be the case. Jesus has a different plan. One that He and the Father have previously determined.

John 11:4-7 (NLT) But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this."

Jesus makes clear that He would reveal Himself in another way to His followers. They would eventually understand that he was far more than just a healer; he was He was the life-giver and the very source of life itself. But for the moment Jesus' actions didn't quite make sense.

As John is writing this, he makes clear that Jesus' relationship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus was special and even he wondered why Jesus didn't stop everything and head back to Bethany. Instead, he purposely delays the trip.

John 11:5-7 (NLT) So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, ⁶ he stayed where he was for the next two days. ⁷ Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

At the moment John, nor the disciples, understood what Jesus was up to. But by now they had learned to trust and simply follow Him. However, in this case they objected about going to Judea.

John 11:8-10 (NLT) But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. ¹⁰ But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light."

Jesus was intentional and knew that the plan wasn't for Him to die by stoning but crucifixion. He knew that the night of his soul would come but this was not the time. Just as they had twelve hours of daylight to work he still had time to work and Lazarus was part of that work.

John 11:11 (NLT) Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up."

The statement "Lazarus sleeps" wasn't a normal statement, that the disciples would have heard, to describe the death of someone. So, they assumed that Lazarus was improving and no longer in danger of dying.

John 11:12-15 (NLT) The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" ¹³ They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. ¹⁴ So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him."

Jesus points to His result of what would happen to their faith when he raises Lazarus from the dead. He would reveal another aspect of who He was and their faith would go to another level.

Jesus arrives in Bethany

When Jesus gets into town he finds out that Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. (John 11:17)

Mary and Martha are in their small village surrounded by people who have come to grieve with them and offer their sympathies. (John 11:18)

Martha and Mary are together and when hear that Jesus has arrived Martha goes outside the village to meet him and Mary stays seated in the house. (John 11:20)

The agony, the pain, the confusion where too much for Mary. Why should she go out to see Jesus? What could He do now? Her brother was dead and beyond the hope of a miracle.

She thought for sure Jesus would have come, if not to heal, at least to see Lazarus before he died. But now he had been buried for four days. What's the use of a healer when one is already dead.

And what about the message he sent back with her messengers? "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this."

What kind of glory could God get out of this? How would God reveal Himself through this death?

Martha's words to Jesus when she went out to meet Him said it all, "Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died! But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." (John 11:21-22)

Jesus makes His plan clear

Jesus doesn't spare words he tells Martha, "your brother will rise again." (John 11:23)

Of course, her only context of resurrection is the doctrine of the raising of the dead on the last day.

John 11:24 (NLT) "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

Martha believed that the resurrection was an event; Jesus was about to show her (and us) that the resurrection is a Person.

John 11:25-26 (NLT) Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

Jesus' words about life and death are seemingly contradictory. Though a believer dies yet shall he live.

John 11:27 (NLT) “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.”

Mary comes to Jesus

The story continues with Mary now coming to Jesus weeping and repeating what Martha had said.

John 11:32 (NKJV) “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

All this human grief and emotion caused Jesus to groan and be troubled in the spirit and ask where have you laid him. (John 11:33,34)

The shortest scripture in the bible is verse 35 ‘Jesus wept’. The people think his sadness is due to his love for Lazarus and the grief that he had died. “See how he loved him.” (John 11:36)

Then the question everyone has been thinking is expressed, and some of them said, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?” (John 11:37)

No one sees it nor do they understand it. Death as we know it is not the same for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus wanted them to understand this.

The events in this story wasn’t really about the illness and death Lazarus but, about the power, purpose and person of Jesus.

The goal wasn’t to raise Lazarus from the dead but to reveal to them who He was. It was to manifest His glory.

He would reveal Himself as the giver of life. The one who has power over death. The one who came to conquer death.

This is what this story is all about. The story isn’t really about Lazarus being raised from the dead but about Jesus being the Lord of life.

John 11:38-44 (NKJV) Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, 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 him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days.”

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me.” ⁴³ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice,

“Lazarus, come forth!”⁴⁴ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

It all began to make sense. As John reflects and writes about this scenario, he wants us to realize that Jesus did not want us to live eternally in our fallen human form, but that He came to offer us eternal life so that when we died bodily, we would genuinely live.

In fact, the life of a believer is of such a quality that he will never die spiritually.

He has eternal life spiritually

John 3:16 (NKJV) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 5:24 (NKJV) “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 10:28 (NKJV) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Physical death is described as a sleep for the body until the resurrection unto life.

2 Corinthians 5:6, 8 (NKJV) So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁸We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (NKJV) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

Jesus still speaks and asks us now.

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)