

May 22, 2022

“The Resurrection and the Life”
Lesson 3 of Unit

John 11:1-44

Intro

We've all heard the phrase, “The only things certain in life are death and taxes.” Theoretically, we can find a way to avoid taxes, but death? It doesn't seem to be something we can avoid.

In one way, it's true that we can't avoid death. At some point our physical bodies will quit working in the way they have been working. But spiritually, we have Jesus' word that we will have new life, a new body, that will be eternal.

Today's passage is the fifth of the seven “I am” statements from Jesus: “I am the resurrection and the life.” This statement comes at the climax of Jesus' public ministry. He is about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Read John 11:17-27

1. vs. 17-18: In 11:1-6, Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick, but delayed coming.

By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days.

It was believed that the soul stayed near the body for three days.

By day four, there was no hope that Lazarus could be raised from the dead

This town of Bethany was only 2 miles from Jerusalem

Jesus could have walked the two miles in 1-2 hours at the most

The fact that He didn't shows that He had a greater purpose than healing a sick man

2. vs. 19: Many have come to comfort Mary and Martha about their brother's death

This indicates the family is well-connected and well-thought of in the community

Ancient Jewish funerals often lasted several days

Professional mourners were sometimes hired to wail and weep at the funeral

This would ensure that the dead received a proper level of respect

To have to hire mourners indicates a lack of mourning by others

There is great depth of feeling here for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus

No need for a professional mourner at this funeral

3. vs. 20: Martha goes out to meet Jesus when she hears He is coming

The verse says Mary stayed at home

This shows a personality difference between the two sisters

Martha appears more assertive, Mary more laid back

Other accounts of them show these same traits

Martha wanted Jesus to make Mary help serve

Mary wanted to listen to Jesus teach (Luke 10:38-42)

4. vs. 21: Mary's going out to Jesus gets her away from the crowd of sympathizers
This allows her to have some private quiet time with Jesus alone
She says to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."
These words can be seen in at least one of two ways:
 Accusatory: "Why weren't you here to help us/him?"
 Faith: "If you had been able to come, I know you could have helped him."
The sister sent word to Jesus (John 11:3) that Lazarus was sick
Jesus chooses to stay 2 days before coming to them (11:6)
By the time Jesus gets to Bethany, Lazarus has been dead four days (11:17)

Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead—Martha cannot know this
 Jesus says, "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."
This event will be another proof that Jesus is God, not just a mighty prophet

5. vs. 22: Martha says, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask"
It looks like she's sideways-asking, "You can give my brother life if You want to"
But 11:39 shows that's not what she's saying/thinking
 She tells Jesus not to open the tomb because the body will stink
 She's not expecting Lazarus to be raised at that point, either
Martha is expressing confident faith in Jesus
She still respects and believes in Him, despite the grief she feels at losing her brother
 Being able to have such faith in the midst of grief is inspiring

6. vs. 23: Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus "will rise again"
He knows what He is about to do—she doesn't
This is seen by her response in vs. 24

7. vs. 24: Martha's response is appropriate to both Jesus and the events happening
She expresses confidence that Lazarus will be raised to eternal life
She takes this as a comment from her rabbi (Jesus), typical of things said at funerals
 "You will see your loved ones again in heaven"
We can see that she is not picking up on what Jesus means in vs. 23
 This is our benefit in getting to read/study this passage multiple times

8. vs. 25a: Here is the fifth of the seven "I Am" statements
Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life"
Jesus says in John 5:25 that He can raise the dead to life again
 Here He says the He *is* the resurrection
 It's not just something He does; it's a part of who He is
And He adds on something more: "and the life"
 Life in Jesus begins at the moment of spiritual rebirth, at baptism
 This new spiritual life is accessed now, and continues into eternity
Some of the benefits of this new life we get to access now
 Some have to wait until later
This new life is available only through Christ: He is the resurrection and the life

9. vs. 25b-26: Jesus says the same thing here, from two opposite perspectives
If a person dies physically (Lazarus), they will live forever spiritually if they have placed their faith in Jesus
Anyone who places their faith in Jesus while alive will never die spiritually
Again, we have the benefit of having read and heard and discussed this many times
For Martha, this may have been a little confusing, especially in her grief

Jesus finishes vs. 26 with a check-in question: “Do you believe this?”

10. vs. 27: Mary makes a sincere confession of faith:
“Yes Lord,” she told Him. “I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

This is similar to Peter’s confession when Jesus asked him who Peter thought He was:
“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Mary doesn’t re-hash what Jesus has said, or ask for further explanations
She simply says she believes Jesus, what He says, and who He is
That’s a good model for all believers to follow
We don’t have to understand everything perfectly to keep our faith in God
He knows what He’s doing, even when we don’t

(John 11:28-40 is not part of today’s assigned text. It deals primarily with Jesus’ conversation with Mary, Martha’s sister.)

Read John 11:41-44

11. vs. 41-42: After the stone has been removed from the tomb, Jesus prays
This prayer is intended more for the people gathered around
Jesus says, “I knew that you always hear me”—He and God are always connected
Then He says, “I said this for the benefit of the people standing here”
And what benefit does He want to occur?
“That they may believe that You sent Me.”
Jesus could have healed Lazarus without coming, like the centurion’s servant
He will raise Lazarus in this way so people will know God has sent Him

12. vs. 43: Jesus calls in a loud voice for Lazarus to come out.
Again, this is more for the people to know Jesus’ power and authority
He could have said it quietly, and Lazarus would have come out as well
John 5:25 and 5:28 record Jesus talking about the same experience
5:25: “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”
5:28: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and come forth.”
This resurrection of Lazarus foreshadows the time when Jesus will call all believers home

13. vs. 44: Lazarus comes out of the grave, wrapped in his burial cloths
Ancient burials wrapped the dead body in strips of cloth with spices
These were to control the odor of decay
His face has a cloth over it, and his hands and feet have strips of cloth on them
It reminds one of the old movie images of mummies walking
Lazarus, even if he could (which is debatable), comes out without taking off the cloths
Jesus has called him, and he comes when he is called—He must obey the Master

Application: Two things stand out from today's passage that we can apply to our lives:

- 1) Jesus has all power and authority to do anything, even raise the dead. As He has died for us to pay the price for our sins, He loves us beyond our ability to understand it. If that's the case, why should we be afraid of anything? He has secured for us our eternal life—as Romans says, “Will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” All the things in this life that we need He will provide for us.
- 2) We humans, like Martha, do not have as clear an understanding of God's plans and workings as He does. But we can maintain our faith in Him, that His plans for us are for our good, and trust Him despite not knowing or understanding everything perfectly.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that You have all things under Your control. Help us not to fear or worry, even in the face of death, for You are working all things for our good. Help us to trust You and follow You, even in the face of those things that concern us. In Jesus' name, Amen.