

John 11: The Resurrection & Life

The Ultimate Declaration

John 11.17-27

Jesus' Too-Late Arrival

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

Two factors are the motivation for the calculated “too-late” arrival of Jesus:

- (1) The body of Lazarus has now been entombed for four days.

Jewish rabbinic belief held that the soul of a person remained hovering over the body for three days, anticipating a resuscitation and a reentry back into the body. On the fourth day as the body changed (decomposed), the soul departed; there was no hope of life revived; death was irreversible.

- (2) Many Jews had come from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary.

The stage is set for the most significant evangelistic moment in the ministry of Jesus. He intends to declare and prove that he not only has the authority to forgive sins (cf. Mark 2.10), but also the authority to give life to whomever he chooses (cf. John 5.21, 25-26). His “I AM” statement, verified by an unprecedented act of resurrection in view of many witnesses, will be undeniable and will result in “many Jews” putting their faith in Jesus as the Messiah (11.45; 12.11).

Martha's Irrepressible Faith

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

- ❖ Martha's confidence in Jesus' interdictive ability - *"If you had been here, my brother would not have died."*
 - ▶ interdict: to forbid in an authoritative manner; prohibit
 - ▶ God sovereignly limits satanic attacks (cf. Job 1.10-12)
 - ▶ God overrules, causing what is meant for evil, to instead bring blessing (cf. Genesis 50.20)
 - ▶ God intervenes to rescue from certain death (cf. Acts 12.11; Daniel 6.22; see also Psalm 33.18-19, 68.20)

- ❖ Martha's confidence in Jesus' mediatory position - *"I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

JOHN 14.12-14

- ❖ At the very least, Martha believes "something" must happen when Jesus is involved!

Martha's Orthodox Faith

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

❖ Jesus' orthodox teaching—

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."

JOHN 5.28-29

❖ Job's resurrection theology—

"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

JOB 19.25-27

❖ The Book of Truth—

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

DANIEL 12.2

❖ Pharisee theology—

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

ACTS 23.6-8

❖ Martha's orthodox belief—

“I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

JOHN 11.24

The Apostles' Creed

“I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.”

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

57. Q. *What comfort does the resurrection of the body offer you?*

A. Not only shall my soul after this life immediately be taken up to Christ, my Head, but also this my flesh, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body.

58. Q. *What comfort do you receive from the article about the life everlasting?*

A. Since I now already feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, I shall after this life possess perfect blessedness, such as no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived— a blessedness in which to praise God forever.

59. Q. *But what does it help you now that you believe all this?*

A. In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.

“I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Question 37: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

Answer: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united in Christ, do rest in their graves, till the resurrection.

Question 38: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

Answer: At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

Jesus' Ultimate Declaration

Jesus said to her, "I am The Resurrection and The Life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."

❖ Jesus' ultimate declaration—

- ▶ *"I AM" - "As the One who is Life-Eternal and Life-Breathing" (P^{1, 3-4}; Genesis 2.7)*
- ▶ *The Resurrection - "I am the One who conquers physical death."*
- ▶ *The Life - "I am the One who conquers spiritual death."*

❖ Jesus' two-fold "life" statement—

- ▶ *Even though one may die physically, the one who believes in Jesus will live eternally.*
- ▶ *Whoever lives by believing in Jesus will never die a spiritual death.*

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Martha's Confession of Faith

"Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

- ❖ This question "Do you believe this?" is at the heart of belief and faith in Jesus—

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

1 CORINTHIANS 15.16-17

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

ROMANS 10.9-10

- ❖ Martha makes the ultimate confession of faith; in that instant, she has all the life that Jesus has just declared is for those who believe in him: spiritual life and eternal life. Martha is a living example of the purpose for which John wrote his gospel: *"that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name"* (20.31). Do you believe?