

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

If you asked me to give you a passage that gets to the heart and soul of the gospel, I would personally take you to **1 Corinthians 15:1-5**. There it is - Christ died for our sins. He was buried and resurrected on the third day and many were witnesses to His resurrection. There it is. However, there's something missing here (other than an incredible miracle). Why? Let's keep reading: **1 Corinthians 15:12-26**. You see - there's no resurrection without a death, but a death without a resurrection is, well, permanent death. But this is deeper than physical death and life. Jesus wasn't the first one to die (even more - enoch and Elijah didn't even die as we know, but that would be missing the point). Jesus also wasn't the first resurrected (three in the Old Testament, Jesus raised three individuals Himself, along with Peter and Paul, etc). That would be missing the point. Nor do I think it's enough to say that Jesus was the first one never to die again (in the sense of physically dying). It's more about the power behind His resurrection. Those who were resurrected before Him died again, yes, but more importantly, their resurrection didn't save you from your sins. Their death didn't pay the penalty. Christ's did.

However, there are two mistakes you can make when thinking about Jesus resurrection: you can forget that He was a man who lived with mankind. He didn't give His life on some deserted island. He wasn't divorced from the realities of life, in particular, death. And we are not to see Him and His crucifixion without seeing ourselves with Him. And so, we go to John 11 to see that Lamb of God in action. To see death. To see the response of mankind. To see Jesus for who He really is - the Resurrection and Life.

In this passage John records the seventh sign of Jesus - the death and raising of Lazarus. This is very fitting considering the next and ultimate sign we read about is Christ's own death, burial, and resurrection. At this point we are anywhere from two to three and a half months away from Jesus' own crucifixion. Here we find Jesus as He should be found: A friend. A man who wept. A Lord who could be angry, troubled, and moved against sin and its consequences. The Son of God with all authority - even over death and life.

Vs. 1-4

- Now, Mary has anointed His feet with her hair yet, but John is taking for granted that his audience is familiar with that account. You can read about it in the next chapter.

- "Lord, he whom You love is ill." They knew that about Jesus. He was a man who loved. He still loves, you know? You know He loves you as well.

Vs. 5-16

- You remember they attempted to kill Jesus and now He's talking about returning to that area. That's crazy talk. Jesus is going to get Himself killed on behalf of someone sick. Doesn't sound like something He should do, does it?
- Now was the time to do the Father's will. Were they up for the challenge or are they too afraid?
- We call him "Doubting Thomas", but we seem to forget this passage. He's ready to die with the Lord. John is the only account that gives a personal look into Thomas "the Twin".

Vs. 17-22

- Martha meets Jesus after hearing He had arrived while Mary remains at the house. She shows her great faith in Jesus, knowing that if He had been present before Lazarus died He would have saved him. She believes that God hears and answers Jesus - it seems like she's subtly hinting at Jesus asking the Father to raise him from the dead. Surely she's heard about the other two He's raised from the dead. However, Jesus had the power in Himself to raise Him - does she completely understand who Jesus is? Fully understand?

Vs. 23-27

- Jesus states that He will rise again, but Martha understands Him to be saying that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection. She's not so different from you and me, you know. We believe, yet we struggle with it. Maybe her request was too good to be true.
- Here we have Jesus' fifth "I am" statement: I am the resurrection and the life. One can die physically, but if He believes in Jesus He will live spiritually. Everyone who lives physically and believes in Jesus will never die spiritually.
 - It is true that we have spiritual life through Jesus. We died spiritually when we sinned, but found spiritual life in Christ. All of this happened when we were physically alive (**Romans 7:9**). However, Jesus goes beyond that. Jesus is saying that while we die, we will all be resurrected and those who believe in Him will have eternal life.
 - Recently we moved our aunt, as you know, from Amherst to this area. There we were - standing in her empty home. All furniture was gone - it was so empty. So sad. All of us have memories (especially my aunt). The house was originally her parents, but she lived and cared for them in that home. My family spent so much time there. As we all looked around that empty room, I know, we were all doing the same thing. Playing the images and videos in our head. I could see my mom and dad sitting on a couch together while Billy and David played around. My Papa sat at the table while my Mama walked by. Then I could see the smiling

faces of Uncle Al and Auntie Fay. We're laughing. We're having dinner. We're playing card games. It's all so sad, because you see, we weren't made to say goodbye. We weren't made to die. It's not natural. God may have known what Adam and Eve would do, but that's not what He wanted from them. Brethren, God doesn't want to say goodbye to you, do you understand that? We have such a hard time saying goodbye to those we've seen and love, and understandably so. However, our main focus is building and renewing a relationship that we broke with our God. It's about coming to know Him more and more, so that as we come to know Him and desire to see Him more than anyone, we'll never have to say goodbye. And Jesus, brethren, felt this. Jesus wants this. Physical death is bad enough, but spiritual death and ultimate separation is unbearable.

- Having said all that - let's not miss the point. Jesus is the resurrection. Paul would say He's the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20), the "first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). Not only did Jesus experience a death like ours, but He lead the way in a resurrection. This wasn't like the other resurrections in the Bible (no, He wasn't literally the first to be resurrected), but He was the first to be resurrected in a spiritual body - never to die again. And, most importantly, His death and resurrection brought hope and forgiveness. No other man or woman's death or resurrection did that for mankind.
- Martha confesses that she believes Jesus is the one, the Messiah/Christ, who was to come into their world. She read about Him as a child, came to know Him as an adult, and would entrust her soul to Him at death. She may not have had perfect faith and belief (vs.39-40), but she should be commended. Her sister would not be the only one remembered 2,000 years later (Matthew 26:13).

Vs. 28-37

- Mary falls at His feet. She has the same faith as Martha - "If you would have been here Lazarus would have lived." I don't believe they are complaining as much as they are glad to see Him and state their trust in His power and goodness.
- Again, this is why it isn't enough to say what Jesus did - you have to see it. See His pain. See His anger at the realities of life. It wasn't pretty for Jesus, nor should it be for us.

Vs. 38-39

- *There is a Jewish tradition that says the soul of the deceased will hover over the grave for three days in hope to reunite with the body, but once the first sign of decomposition occurs (typically on the fourth day) it makes its final departure. Not sure how accurate this is and if Jesus was aware and purposely waited four days. There's no way of knowing, but it is an interesting thought.*

Vs. 40-44

- Jesus reminds her of His words: He told her that belief would result in seeing the glory of God. They take away the stone and Jesus prays out loud among the crowd. He thanks the Father, who does in fact hear Him, just as Martha confessed in verse 22. She believes this, but doesn't fully grasp her own words. Jesus makes it clear that His prayer is for those standing around so they may believe that He is from God.
- It's hard to imagine what that would be like. I honestly can't appreciate what happened. I've had dreams where my dad came back to life. You want to spend so much quality time with him, but sometimes in the dreams I go back to routine and don't pay attention to him and he dies again. I think about Lazarus - what did he see when he died? Did he see anything? What was that conversation like? How much sweeter were his relationships with those whom he loved. How long did he live after that, etc.? However, that'd be missing the bigger picture. I think about how Jesus raised this man from the dead, but many immediately brush it off. They didn't believe. They didn't appreciate who Jesus was. This is incredibly shocking to me.