

I AM the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:25-26

The 5th great “I AM” statement of the Book of John is “I am the Resurrection and the Life”

The Context: Jesus has declared Himself to be the Door (10:7, 9) and the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14) in John 10. Then, the Jewish religious leaders sought again to take Him, but He escaped and went beyond the Jordan (in Perea, where John the Baptist had baptized) and abode (and many believed on Him there- John 10:39-42).

Next, John 11 records the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. A brief summary of John 11:1-24 leads up to this wonderful “I AM the Resurrection and the Life” statement in John 11:25-26. It is as follows: Lazarus was sick in Bethany (near Jerusalem) and his sisters (Mary and Martha) sent a messenger to Jesus in Bethabara (in Perea). Jesus loved Lazarus (11:5) and yet He waited two days before He said, “let’s go” (11:7). His disciples question His intent to go to Judea (Bethany) where the Jews were seeking to kill Him (11:8). Jesus tells them He will awaken Lazarus out of sleep (11:11); and the disciples thought Jesus meant Lazarus was recovering from sickness with natural sleep, but Jesus tells them “Lazarus died (11:14). He had explained to His puzzled disciples that Lazarus’ sickness “was for the glory of God the Father and Son (11:4).

Martha hears that Jesus is coming and goes out to meet Him; Lazarus having been dead four days (11:17, 20). Martha says to Jesus: If You had been here, my brother would not have died (demonstrating her faith in Jesus’ power to heal- 11:22). Jesus tells her that her brother will rise again, but she thinks He is talking about the final resurrection in the last days (11:23-24). Regardless, Martha again demonstrated her faith/belief in the future resurrection of the dead. Though Martha was thinking of the resurrection in the last day, Jesus was about to bring her understanding of the resurrection much closer to home. He stands before her not just as a far off, future raiser of the dead, but as the only One who can raise her brother from the dead presently.

The 5th Great “I AM” declaration (10:25-26): It is in this context and at this point, that Jesus declares this wonderful truth to Martha: “Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; the one believing in Me, even if that one was dead (physically), he will live. And whosoever (literally, all) living and believing in Me shall never die (literally, no, no dies); Do you believe this?” (10:25-26). After declaring that He is the resurrection and the life, He gives a call to faith to believe in Him for everlasting life.

Jesus is the conqueror of death, the giver of life, and the raiser of the dead to all who believe in Him. All who die physically will live again with everlasting life or everlasting death. He gives life to those who believe in Him, both in the present and in the future (John 5:24, 28-29; 6:47).

The Resurrection: The word, “resurrection” (Greek #386) means resurrection; a raising up and is used 42 times in the New Testament. Webster’s Dictionary defines it as “the state of one being risen from the dead.” Resurrection refers to a physical, bodily resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ’s physical, bodily resurrection is the foundation of Christianity and guarantees the future bodily resurrection of all believers. Furthermore, all people (both the redeemed and unredeemed) will rise again in the last day (even as Martha believed).

Martha believed that the resurrection was a future event, Jesus showed her (and us) that the resurrection is a Person (Himself). Martha thought victory over death was a future expectation; Jesus showed her that victory over death was (is) a present reality. Martha’s knowledge of eternal life was an abstract idea; Jesus showed her that knowledge of eternal life is (can be) a personal relationship.

By her statements, Martha considered “time” an insurmountable obstacle. In effect, she was saying “It’s too late to help Lazarus (dead four days and decaying), now we must await the future resurrection (more time). Jesus was about to show her that neither time nor death is an obstacle to Him. Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43), and Lazarus was immediately resurrected. It’s one thing to “claim” to be the resurrection and the life, but Jesus proved it by raising Lazarus. With Christ, death is but “sleep” (1 Thess. 4:13). The resurrection of Lazarus would foreshadow and illustrate the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

Jesus made this “I am” statement in response to the death of His friend, Lazarus. Death is that dreaded reality that every human being hopes to avoid, but can never escape. Death is mankind’s perennial enemy and greatest fear. In fact, the Bible says that men live all their lives in bondage to the fear of death (Heb. 2:15). Death comes to young and old, rich and poor, good and bad, educated and ignorant, king and commoner, etc. However, every believer is forever sheltered from death; death has lost the power to destroy (1 Cor. 15:55). The death of the body will only be a sleep, from which it will be awakened at the resurrection. Death will only be a change to a better existence. What a precious state of existence; to be “asleep in Jesus” while in His presence (2 Cor. 5:8).

The Life: The word, “life” (Greek #2222- zoe) means literally life (physical and/or spiritual), and is used 135 times in the New Testament. All life comes from (is derived from) God’s self-existent life. We will study this in more detail next week with Jesus’ next “I am” statement: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6).

Jesus did not just say, “I am life” on this occasion. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” **He is resurrection life!** Jesus put these two truths together. Lazarus needed both resurrection, and life after a resurrection. When Jesus proclaimed “I am the resurrection and the life,” He was claiming to be both the source of resurrection and the source of life. There is no resurrection apart from Jesus Christ; and there is no eternal life apart from Jesus Christ. He does not just give life, He is life. Death has no ultimate power over Him, and all who believe in

Him will share His triumph over death. It is impossible for death to defeat believers in Jesus Christ because they have the Life (Jesus Christ) of eternal life (I John 5:11-12).

The Ultimate Question: Jesus then asks Martha, “Do you believe this?” Notice, this question is not: “Do you believe in the resurrection?” This is a question of: Do you believe in Me? “And she (Martha) says unto Him: Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God; the One coming into the world” (11:27). Martha calls Jesus Lord, Christ (the Anointed One; Messiah), Son of God, and the “Coming One” all in a single statement. A magnificent confession! She further states, “I have believed” (perfect tense- in the past and continuing); a settled, firm belief! She likely didn’t fully understand His upcoming death, burial, and resurrection; but she knew He was the Promised One. Her faith is placed in Jesus.

Today, Jesus’ proclamation is a wonderful comfort to those who are grieving at the death of a believing loved one, but these words present a very difficult challenge to Martha to whom the words are originally addressed. The reason these words are a comfort to us is that we know how the account of Jesus and his friend Lazarus turns out in the end. Also, we know that when Jesus died on the cross, He was raised by the power of Godhead before He ascended into heaven. But when Jesus spoke these words to Martha, Lazarus was still in his tomb a short distance away decaying (a sure sign of the curse stemming from Adam’s sin).

The apostle Paul would later write of Jesus Christ as the One who “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). The word “abolish” means to put an end to something (to eradicate, annihilate). Jesus Christ obliterated death! Wait a minute, people die (physically) every second of every day. What does it mean that Jesus Christ abolished death? The Bible teaches that physical death is the result of spiritual death. God's definition of spiritual death is the separation of the soul and spirit from God. Jesus obliterated spiritual death by bringing man's soul and spirit back into conscious fellowship with God. But He also obliterated physical death by rising from the dead and becoming the first of a great multitude who will rise also. In the original order of things, spiritual death (which came through the sin of Adam as well as our own personal sin) led ultimately to physical death. In the new order of things, spiritual life (which comes through faith in Jesus Christ) will lead ultimately to physical life eternally in the New Heavens and on the New Earth without the possibility of death. To God be the Glory! Jesus truly is the Resurrection and the Life!