

Evidence for life after death (1)

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[0 : 00] The reading is John 11, verses 1 to 53. That's page 1081 in your Bible. Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, in the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

It was Mary who appointed the Lord with odyssey and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters said to him, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill.

But when Jesus heard it, he said, This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this, he said to the disciples, Let us go to Judea again. The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and you are going there again?

[1 : 08] Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.

After saying these things, he said to them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him. But his disciples said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.

Now Jesus had spoken of his death, that they thought he meant taking rest and sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so you may believe.

But let us go to him. So Thomas, called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Now, when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

[2 : 27] Martha said to Jesus, 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.

Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

She said to him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, The teacher is here and is calling for you.

And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

[3 : 44] Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And he said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. So the Jews said, See how he loved him.

But some of them said, Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying? Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb.

It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead four days.

Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God? So they took away the stone, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have told me.

[4 : 55] I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me. When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him and let him go.

Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, What are we to do?

For this man who forms many signs, if we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

[6 : 06] He did not say this of his own accord, but the high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

So from that day on, they made plans to put him to death. I do keep that passage open. If you've lost it, it's page 108.1, 108.2. John 11, thinking about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Now I was doing some research on the internet, as you do, and I came across a survey, that was done two years ago, by a public theology think tank called Theos, asking people about what they think about life after death.

And they came up with the statistics in the UK, that around 53% of people believe in life after death. Now you might think that's quite a lot to people, but it is only half. But half the people you'd meet on the average street, walking up Brixton High Street, or West Alley, or wherever it is, would think that people live after they die.

Many people, I think, would be influenced by atheism. More and more, that figure is dropping. Bertrand Russell, famous atheist, said this once famously, I believe that when I die, I shall rot.

[7 : 18] And that's the atheist mantra, isn't it? When you die, after you die, well, worms eat your body, and then there's nothing. There's just nothingness, for the rest of forever. And that's about what half people believe in.

Of the half that believe that there is life after death, about half of those again, so that quarter of people, go for reincarnation, which is the idea that, you know, you live your life, and in some sort of cosmic judgment, if you live a good life, then the next time you'll come back to something slightly better.

And if you live a bad life, then the next time you'll come back is something slightly less good. So about half the people that believe in life after death in this country believe in reincarnation.

But Christians don't believe in reincarnation. We believe in resurrection. And that's very different. I don't come back as a different form with resurrection. Resurrection means that when I die, at some point in the future, I, me, Mark Fosse, will be raised again.

Now just as Jesus died and was raised from the dead, just as Lazarus, we'll see in a moment, died and was raised from the dead, the promise is that one day, if we die before the Lord Jesus comes back, our souls, our spirits, if we trust in Jesus, will go to be with God in heaven.

[8 : 32] So right now, the spirits of those who have died in Christ, right now, look upon God as spirits. We have the angels worshipping God in heaven, in paradise. But one day in the future, Jesus will say, stop!

And everything will stop. And all the dead will come out of their graves, both those who trusted in Jesus and those who didn't, and be clothed with bodies again, physical, real bodies, just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so everyone will be raised from the dead, physical bodies once more.

And there will be a judgment, and those who have trusted in Jesus will live in the new creation, the physical new world, a place without suffering and death. But those who haven't, those who have done evil, will physically be in hell, which is where God's justice is being meted out for the rest of forever.

So, our atonal existence, whoever you are, wherever you're from, is physical, it's resurrection. Our dead spirits will one day be clothed with new bodies, just as you put on clothes in the morning.

One day we'll be given new bodies, resurrection, for the rest of forever. Now, I, most of my friends who I talk to, if I ever get to talk to them about this sort of thing, they're just your normal, average Joe on the street, think that's the most ridiculous.

[9 : 48] At this point, Christianity, just, you know, love your neighbour and be nice to people and good morals, at this point, it steps off into la-la land when you're talking about resurrection and all this sort of thing. This is where it goes mental.

Let me say two things in response to that. Firstly, most people that I know who think that the Christian hope for life after death is stupid, also believe in stupid things about life after death.

They might say in a survey, if you're asked by someone on the telephone, what do you think there's life after death? They'll say no. But when they actually themselves have to come face to face with death, when they have to have the faces, it's often at that point that they're slightly less clear in what they think about life after death.

I think this is most clearly shown at funerals. You must have been to funerals and heard the comments that people make. It just exposes they don't really know what they think, the trite comments that come out.

Some people will say, oh, they've gone to a better place. But hang on, don't you believe there's no life after death? People often say things like that, don't they? They all say, rest in peace.

[10 : 56] Maybe rest in peace, as if he's kind of gone to sleep or something. But they don't believe he's not resting, he's not in peace. That person is just nothing there. There's nothing of them.

It's just interesting, when people have to face death, I think it shows that they don't really, they're not as close or they don't stick to their guns about what they really believe about life after death. and death itself exposes that.

But the second thing I want to say in response to this idea that life after death and resurrection is ridiculous is that what we believe as Christians has evidence to back it up.

We're not kind of, this is not Peter Pan or Lord of the Rings, we're not just believing in fairy tales because it makes us feel better, because it gives us comfort, or some sort of crutch for life after death.

But there's real evidence. And actually, what I want to do in this talk and in two weeks' time is show you the evidence for life after death. So that you can put your hope in an absolute certainty that it will happen because there's real evidence that backs it up.

[12 : 00] So Christians, it's not pie in the sky when you die. It's not a comfort blanket to make you feel better at dying. It's not wishful thinking. It's concrete reality supported by hard evidence.

So when we're at funerals, we don't need to resort to cliches or hopeful, vague statements. When confronted with death, Christians know exactly what we're expecting in the future.

And there is nothing greater than that. So my aim today is to show you some evidence. If you have your service sheets, you'll be able to turn to the back. There are three points on there that will help you follow through.

And if you'd like to make notes, do make notes. Let me read the beginning of John chapter 11, if you've still got it open now, on page 108. Let me read from verse 1. Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus, or Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

These three, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, are brothers and sisters living in this village, Bethany, which is in the south. So think of Bethany. If you think Jerusalem's in the south, the capital city, and Bethany's just a couple miles from Jerusalem.

[13 : 04] Think of Bethany as St. Albans, you know, just outside the capital city. And at this point, Jesus is up north, he's in Yorkshire somewhere, so there's a long way up, and Bethany's right down south. Verse 2, it was Mary who had anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

In other words, this is the Mary who really loves Jesus. They're a really close family. Jesus knows Mary and Martha and Lazarus very, very well, and they're very close.

There's a lot of mutual love between them. Verse 3, so the sisters sent to him a message saying, Lord, he, that's Lazarus, whom you love, is ill.

But when Jesus heard it, he said, this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God so that the Son of Man might be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus.

So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place that he was. It's a bit weird, this, isn't it? You see, the sisters know Jesus very well.

[14 : 16] They've seen his power. They've seen his miracles. They trust in him. So desperately, knowing that their brother was on his deathbed, they send a message to Jesus. Jesus, get down here as soon as you can.

Please. If you love us, Lazarus is fine. Please, you've got to get here. You can imagine the tears. So what does Jesus do? Jesus knows that he can heal someone in another district which he's done a number of times in his life.

He sits on his backside for two more days because he loved them. That's a bit curious, isn't it? Why is that? Have a look down again at verse 6.

So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer. I think many people think that Jesus, as a miracle worker, was going around doing miracles purely out of compassion.

And he was a compassionate miracle worker. We're often told that he healed entire towns and sicknesses because they came to him. But Jesus actually is doing miracles, can I put it this way, to show off.

[15 : 21] Jesus does miracles so that you and I and everyone there looks at him and goes, wow, there's something different about you. He's not just doing miracles for the sake of them.

He's doing them so that we see something about the man. Keep your finger in John 11 and flip over to John 20. This is, if you like, a summary verse for the whole book.

In fact, the ESV translators have put a little heading that says the purpose of this book, apparently. That's what they think. And there's something in that. Right at the end of chapter 20 on page 1093, let me read to you verse 30 and 31, the last two verses of chapter 20.

Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these signs are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name.

Now, John calls the miracles that Jesus is doing signs. They're not just miracles, they're not just tricks, they're signs, and like all signs, they point to something. What do the signs in John's gospel point to?

[16 : 31] They point to verse 31, they're written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you have life in his name. In other words, he's doing these miracles so that you go, oh, he's the Christ, he's the Son of God, I get this now, and I believe in that, and by believing in that I have eternal life, I have life in his name.

Jesus wants to do impressive miracles so that you think differently about who he is. He's not just your common old goal, the miracle worker, if that sort of thing exists. He's the Son of God, that's why he's doing his miracles.

So, Martha and Mary have sent him this messenger, Lazarus is dying, come and do a healing miracle. And he thinks, no, see, this is my opportunity, see, this is why this has happened.

This is going to happen so that I can show you my glory. Verse 4, chapter 11, it is for the glory of God so that the Son of Man might be glorified through it.

I'm going to raise this man from the dead so that you believe in me, so that you see something about me that you've never seen before. This is Jesus' opportunity. So on that one hand, it looks wrong, but behind it, he knows exactly what he's doing.

[17 : 47] Now, the disciples are thinking in a worldly sense as well. They're saying, don't go to Judea because actually, last time we were in Judea, at the end of chapter 10, the Jews there tried to kill you.

So he's fled to Yorkshire, fled to Galilee in the north. And now he's saying, we're going to go back to Jerusalem in the south, we're going back to the capital. What are you doing? Verse 7, let us go to Judea again, he says.

The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, they're trying to kill you. And you're going there again? But Jesus critically answered, are they not 12 hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world.

But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. He's talking about daylight and night, walking in the day, walking in the night. Walking in God's daylight is walking in the knowledge of God's ways.

Jesus is saying, you know God, you know God's plan, you know God's gospel, you know God's ways. Walk as if that's real. Don't walk as if there's no God. You see, what the disciples are saying, don't go down south because the Jews are going to get you.

[18 : 52] They're walking in fear. They're not trusting in God, they're trusting and fearful of people. And Jesus is saying, look, if you walk in God's light and the way God walks, if you walk in the light of understanding God's gospel, you know that we can go down there and God's got our backs.

We'll be fine. At the right time, I will be taken and I'll be executed. But until that time, until God's time, we're fine. Trust in God, walking God's light.

Don't fear people, fear God. And so they go down to Judea. Now they're confused, the disciples don't understand what's going down. He talks cryptically, verse 11, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to wake him and they don't understand well if he's fallen asleep then he'll recover.

But Jesus had spoken of his death. So Jesus told them plainly, verse 14, Lazarus has died and for your sake I'm glad that I was not there. Why? So that you may believe, but let us go to him.

Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He's deliberately letting Lazarus die so that the disciples, so that Mary, Martha and all the Jews there and so that we might believe something about Jesus.

[20 : 07] So that was my first point there. Jesus wants to show us his glory so that we might believe. But believe what exactly? You see many people who are Christians believe in Jesus.

They trust that he's the son of God. They believe that Jesus died for their sins. But Jesus wants to teach us more than just that Jesus is the son of God. He wants to teach us the second point that he can raise us from the dead.

Do we believe that Jesus can raise people from the dead? We're going to look at several different people who struggle to believe this and we must have sympathy with them.

And as we go through Mary and, sorry, Martha and then Mary and the Jews, let's put ourselves in their shoes and think, now, would that be us? Is that us? Let's look at Martha, which is the longest of the three, and her unbelief.

Let me read from verse 17. When Jesus came to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

[21 : 12] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him. But Mary remained seated in the house. In other words, there is Jesus. She's heard that Jesus is coming, and while he's still outside the village, if you like, Martha, who's the older sister, makes her way out of the village.

So it's just Martha and Mary, sorry, Martha and Jesus and the disciples outside the village. Now at this point, Martha is inconsolable. Her brother has died, presumably as a younger guy, before his time.

She'd sent a message for Jesus. Jesus, get here. He's dying. You love him. And it just seemed like days and days and days and not a word, nothing. And then finally, our Jesus has come.

But you see, the problem is, Lazarus had been dead before that. And although Mary loves Jesus very much and has great honour and respect for him, at this point, she's thinking, where were you?

Jesus, I love you, but where were you? Have a look at verse 21. Martha said to Jesus, Lord, she still honours him, but if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died.

[22 : 22] But even now, I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. I think she's shown there, she still honours him, she still loves him, she still knows him from God. But underneath it, something's changed.

That Jesus, he could always trust him, who's always there, who always said the right thing, who's always in the right place at the right time, utterly unflappable, utterly reliable. But not this time.

He'd let us down. Lord, where were you? And look at what Jesus says. I'm not sure if this is the most appropriate thing to say in one sense, at a funeral, when you feel that the person, you just let the person down.

He says, verse 23, your brother will rise again. It's again, it's a Christian version of that trite kind of funeral comment. It sounds like that on the face of it. Your brother will rise again.

Well, possibly a little bit hurt, Martha says to him, verse 24, I know that he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day. The Jews believed and hoped for and waited for this day of resurrection on the last day.

[23 : 21] Jesus, that's not the most comforting thing. I wanted you to be here. I don't need this resurrection on the last day stuff. You see, Jesus isn't talking about the last day only. He's talking about now.

Look how he answers her. And this is so important, verse 25. Jesus said to her, I am, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who believes in, and lives and believes in me, shall never die.

Do you believe this? You see, underneath Martha's hurt and feeling betrayed, Jesus is trying to teach her and us a bit more about who he is.

Yeah, Lazarus will be raised on the last day. Everyone will be raised on the last day. But do you realise, Jesus is saying, I am the resurrection and the life.

[24 : 20] Resurrection is not just something that's going to happen, an outside process out there on the last day. Resurrection is going to happen, Jesus says, because I'm going to do it.

I am the resurrection. I am the life. The reason there will be resurrection is because of my say-so. God has given me the power to raise the dead.

At my command, it will happen. When John meets Jesus in Revelation, chapter 1, Jesus describes himself as having the keys to death and Hades.

Jesus has the key to unlock the door. He decides when death and Hades happen. He can raise people from the dead. He can do that. He says, do you believe this, to Martha?

Do you see, resurrection isn't just an abstract, idle thing out there. I am the resurrection and I am the life. It's me that has the power to do this.

[25 : 16] Do you believe this? She says, verse 27, yes Lord, I believe that you're the Christ, the Son of God who's coming into this world. Dear Martha, she believes in last Jesus but she hasn't understood.

I believe you're the Christ. I believe you're coming to, I believe my sins are forgiven in you Jesus. No, no, no, no. I am the resurrection and the life.

If you trust in me, I will raise you from the dead. I have that power. Do you believe this? I don't think Martha does understand it. Not yet. Mary, likewise, struggles with unbelief, I think.

Look at verse 28. When she'd said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying, a private, the teacher is here, and calling to you. And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. So now Mary's running out to see him outside the village and there is Jews that are there consoling and helping them, that go with them.

So imagine the scene now, there is Jesus and his disciples, they're still waiting outside the village. And now Martha and Mary and the Jews come. And this time there is a lot more tears, a lot more tears.

[26 : 27] Look at verse 32. When Mary came to Jesus, where he was and saw him, she fell at his feet and she said to him exactly what Martha said. Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died.

Now this time, instead of engaging him in a theological discussion, actually what he's faced with, Martha, and now Mary, he's married, he really loved him, he was very close to him, weeping, Lord, where were you?

All the Jews mourning. And it's just, it's just, it's a heartbreaking situation. And instead of theological diatribing, Jesus weeps. Verse 33, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And in verse 35, Jesus wept. You've got to, this is extraordinary, okay? Jesus is Mr. Cool. in every situation in his life, nothing slapped him.

There was an incident early on in his life, in his ministry, where he's at home in Capernaum, and the people in his hometown taking up on a cliff to throw him off and stone him to death.

[27 : 41] And the Bible says, Jesus can't be walked through. There's literally not an incident in Jesus' life. He's on a boat in a storm, and the disciples are terrified. He's asleep on a cushion.

Jesus is Mr. Calm. And here, it says he's deeply moved in his spirit. That word in Greek is, he's outraged.

He's like a horse, snorting. It's indignant. He's angry. I think this is an important, important thing that John's teaching us here.

Because although Jesus waited for several days, waiting for Lazarus to die, knowing that he's going to raise him from the dead, dead, and yet confronted with death, God hates death.

God weeps at death. God is outraged at death. It's easy to think, isn't it, that there's death in the world, it's all God's fault, and the reason there is death, and death is in the world because of sin.

[28 : 41] God could not let sinners go on and be immortal forever, be like gods, and carry on in their sin. Imagine what wicked people would be like if you gave them life forever, they'd become more and more and more wicked.

Death is absolutely necessary, but death isn't good, and God is ushering in a new creation in which death will be gone, and all suffering will be gone. That is the future.

So when God sees death, he weeps, he's outraged, it's not a good thing, it's an awful thing. And I think that's a very encouraging thing when we think about death ourselves, that you've come across people that you know that have died, or you're thinking about your own death.

Jesus, God is the comfort because you can speak to him and say, God, I know you don't love this, I know you think this is awful, I know you snort at this. So God can be a massive, massive comfort.

Jesus' wept is a very, very important verse because Jesus can be alongside us in the most difficult times. But even in the midst of Jesus weeping, look at how the Jews respond in verse 36.

[29 : 50] The Jews said, see how he loved him. But some of them said, yeah, but could not he have opened the eyes of the blind man also kept this man from dying? You see, Martha, Mary and the Jews, they all recognised Jesus' love for Lazarus.

They all recognised him as a powerful and great man. But all of them underline there's this nagging problem. There's a nagging unbelief. Jesus, where were you when it really mattered?

Where were you? Well, our third point, and this is really where it comes to its fruition, is that Jesus showed them and he showed up his glory by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Let me read from verse 38. Jesus deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave and the stone lay against it. And Jesus said, take away the stone. In those days what the Jews did, you see, they would bury someone until their corpse had rotted.

And they would take the bones and put them in an ossuary, a box, because they were expecting waiting for resurrection from the dead on the last day. Lazarus is in the tomb. So Lazarus is waiting for his body to rot so they can keep his bones.

[30 : 59] So he's in a tomb for this period. But they say, verse 39, Lord, by this time there will be an over, for he has been dead for four days. And Jesus said to her, did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

See, Jesus deliberately waited so that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. He wanted it so that no one would think if he raised him from the dead, oh, it's just the contrary. Lazarus had swooned, he was unconscious, he fell asleep, he was in a coma, and he woke up.

Now there's already the smell of decomposition already happening. He's already been dead for those. And yet, it must have been a really weird and awkward moment. Imagine telling someone at a graveside, at a funeral, can you just pull the box up, please, and just very offensive and bold thing to say.

You've got to be pretty sure you're going to say a thing like that. So they took away the stone, verse 31, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you, you've always heard me.

I know you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around me, that they may believe that you sent me. So even now he's praying to God, knowing that he's going to do this, but he wants people everywhere to know that Jesus has the authority of God to raise the dead.

[32 : 23] And so, when he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! And you just imagine a moment of silence, everyone's standing there, everyone's eyes are fixed on the tomb, and just after a moment, there's a rustle, there's a noise, and there's a hand that comes around me to the tomb, and then a foot, out stumbles Lazarus, white as a sheep, still partly rotten, actually, covered with the grave clothes that he was wrapped in, but walking, talking, eyes open, breathing, looking, staring.

And it must have been extraordinary, it must have been absolutely amazing, it must have just been silenced, jaws dropped, hair on every part of your body standing on end.

there's a dead man that's come alive, and it's just because Jesus said three words. There's a great commentary by St. Augustine, the early church father, he said, if Jesus hadn't said Lazarus come out, they'd just come out, all of the tombs would have broken open, all of the people would have come out, and actually of course that's exactly what will happen.

On one day in the future, Jesus will just say come out, and all the dead will come out of their tombs. He just has to, I mean it's extraordinary, isn't it? He just has to speak, and death is told off like a naughty child.

A dead man comes to life, absolutely extraordinary. Let me try to illustrate what happened, if you could imagine what happened on that day. Ked Croft is waiting outside, Ked Croft is an undertaker, if you know Ked, and I asked him if he'd bring one of the bodies from his morgue so that we could try and do that.

[34 : 14] No, of course I've not done that. But I want you to imagine that he had, I want you to imagine that I'd ask Ked to bring in a body, and we had it laid here, and it still smelled, you'd all be kind of, what is he doing?

This is just a bit, this is inappropriate and weird for church, what are you doing? And I said to you, look, watch this, get up!

Now, none of you would ever come to church again, this has become a weird cult thing, absolutely mental. But I tell you what, if I could do that, what would you think of me?

Oh, the guy, I like some of his servants, some of them, you know, nice guy, love the baby, but I'm not sure, I'm not sure about, but now, I've just raised the body from the dead, what would you think of me, then?

I mean, I hope you'd be absolutely terrified of me, frankly, because there is not a person ever alive that can do this, there's literally no person that can just do that, that's commanding their own authority, get up.

[35 : 24] But this is exactly what he did. You see, my friends, there is evidence for life after death, and Jesus has shown you, he didn't just do this once, you know, Jesus raised the dead on a number of occasions, he did it publicly, there were lots of people watching, he did it spontaneously, he can choose when to do it, he has the authority to raise the dead, Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Now, it's interesting, even having seen this, opinion on him was divided, look at verse 45, many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in him, but, some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done, and we get this interesting story about how Caiaphas prophesied without realising about Jesus' death, and verse 53 concludes, so from that day on they made plans to put him to death, fascinating, Jesus does this extraordinary miracle, some people think, I'll believe in that, I'll go for that, and some people think, we need to silence this man, we need to kill him, and the same is true to that.

See, when you're confronted with the power and authority of Jesus, it polarises people, you can't be left neutral, either you put your faith in him, or you want to distance yourself from him, you hate him, I want nothing to do with him, can I appeal to you as I finish, if you're here and you're not a Christian and you're thinking about these things, I want you to know that you can know there is life after death, and that Jesus is the man that will make it happen, because he's done it, he's done it several times, and in fact, he went on to do it with his own life, here's a man who said, I'll bring myself back from death, and he did it, and that's exactly what the Christian faith is, we're believing in real concrete evidence, things that happen, they raise life after death, and if you'd like to find out more about that, come and do our Christianity Explored course, come and ask me about it, or in fact, actually later on this afternoon when we look at this thing, solutions of God, thinking about death and hope, I want to think more about what atheists really look at when they think about death, and what hope they really do have, and how the

Christian hope is actually a brilliant contrast of that, please come along and be involved in the discussions and the talk when we do that later on at 4.15 before 30 start, please come, and for those of us who are Christians, I wonder if we can relate with Martha and with Mary and the Jews, when Jesus turned up, he said to Martha, do you believe this, and she said yeah, I believe you're the Christ, the Son of God, I believe in you, I trust in you, I'm a Christian, I go to church every week, I know that you forgive my sins, I call you my Lord, I trust you, but Jesus says no, no, no, I am the resurrection and the life, do you trust me with regard to your own death?

When you face your own mortality, and all of us have to do that, can you put that in my hands, Jesus says, can you trust me? Now that's a massive thing, it's really where the rubber hits the road, can I trust Jesus with my death?

[38 : 36] And he says don't just believe my world, watch what I do, and I'll raise someone from the dead, and I'll raise myself from the dead, and he did. Brothers and sisters, we can look into the face of death personally and know that we'll be raised from the dead.

We can look into the face of death and not fear, that's an extraordinary thing, because Jesus is the resurrection, Jesus is the life, so here we come to Easter day, as we come to Easter, and we look at the resurrection of Jesus, you're looking at your future, it will happen to you, he's done it many times, and he will do it again.

Do you believe this? Let me say a prayer, and I can take some questions. Let's just say a prayer. We've touched on some difficult subjects, thinking about death, and for many of us, these are difficult things to think about.

We want to honour and worship you, for you are the one who's risen from the dead. We want to look at you and with wonderment, imagine and know your awesome power and authority that the Father has given you.

Lord Jesus, we trust and believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, but also we want to believe that you are the resurrection and the life, and put our life into your hands to entrust our life and our eternal future to you, because of your grace and because of your power.

[40 : 11] For those of us who are going through the morning, even now, Lord Jesus, please come for us. We know that you wept and you snort and you are outraged at death. And yet, Lord Jesus, we trust you, we trust you forever with our own lives and the lives of our loved ones, for you are the resurrection and the life.

We pray these things with faith in your name. Amen.