

Jesus, The Resurrection and the Life

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Date: 01 April 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Now, for a short time, let's turn together to John chapter 11, and reading again at verse 25. John 11 and at verse 25.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he 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. One feature of John's gospel is that quite frequently in it we have miracles accompanied by such statements as Jesus makes about himself. Miracles in John are actually called signs. That's the word that John uses, though sometimes translated miracle, but in this translation, the ESV rightly translates the word as signs, the signs, the miraculous works of Jesus.

Jesus. And these accompany such statements as the I am statements, where especially, like chapter 6, for example, you find Jesus feeding the crowd, the large crowd, miraculously from the little food that he had to begin with. And then he says about himself, I am the bread of life. I am the true bread which came down from heaven. In other words, you find what he's saying is actually explained, if you like, by the miracle or the sign. Or you put it the other way, the sign gives an insight into what is meant by the statement beginning, I am. The feeding of the 5,000 of the large crowd, miraculously, helps an understanding of what Jesus meant by, I am the bread of life. And you find the same here in John chapter 11. The best known miracle, probably in many ways the most remarkable miracle of Jesus recorded for us, is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. And Jesus had deliberately, as we read, not gone to where Lazarus lived, to the home of Mary and

Martha, to console them. With regard to their brother's death, he had stayed two days. He had waited two days deliberately. And he knew that he was going to do something which would be an insight for them into something very important about himself, that he is the resurrection and the life. And the raising of Lazarus, taking Lazarus back out of the tomb, restoring him to life, is itself an insight into what Jesus meant when he said, I am the resurrection and the life. So the sign of the raising of Lazarus is something that helps us into an understanding, as far as we can, of what Jesus meant by, I am the resurrection and the life. Now, the two things we're going to look at from these few verses, first of all, the assertion made by Jesus about himself. I am the resurrection and the life. That is what he asserted, that this is who he is or what he is. And secondly, in verses 26, or the second half of 25, through to the end of the passage, the assurance given by Jesus against death. Yeah, the assertion made by Jesus about himself and the assurance given by Jesus against death. Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Let's look at the assertion, first of all. There he is, dealing with Martha and getting Martha to speak back to him. It's interesting, as an aside, you can just follow this out for yourselves, and it's important when we come ourselves to try and help those who have sorrow and bereavement in their lives. These two sisters were very different personalities. Mary was a very quiet, studious person. Martha was a very bustling, busy person. Martha liked, obviously, to engage in conversation that needed her situation dealt with in that way, and Jesus knew that. Whereas Mary, there's no word at all from Jesus to Mary. There's no record here that he spoke to her. He just stood beside her when she eventually came to meet with him. Now, that's important. Sometimes it's not what you say to people that really helps them in their grief or in their sorrow or in their perplexity.

It's just being there for them, being by their side, because very often we don't have the words anyway that are adequate to deal with a person in deep grief. But your presence means a lot to them, and their presence means a lot to us whenever we're experiencing grief and sorrow and loss. That's just by the way, but it's interesting as a feature of the passage. Here he is dealing with Martha, so he actually says, after she has said, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died.

[5 : 24] But Jesus said, your brother will rise again. Martha said, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. And then Jesus pins on that, this great statement, this assertion, I am the resurrection and the life. Now, you notice he's combining the two and uniting the two things together, connecting them, resurrection and life. He didn't just say, I am the resurrection, nor did he say, I am the life. He said both, I am the resurrection and the life. He's tying them both together. Because you recall previously, the likes of chapter 10, for example, and verses 27 and 28 there. He's been talking there, of course, about him being the good shepherd and how he looks after his sheep. Verse 27, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. Question is, well, what is eternal life? What does it consist of? And now what you find in chapter 11 and this great statement about himself, I am the resurrection and the life, really helps an understanding of what is meant by eternal life. We cannot really engage in a proper, full, complete understanding of eternal life or explain it fully as we would like to. It's such a profound thing. But he helps us to understand it by the fact that he mentions it along with resurrection. In other words, eternal life consists of life beyond the reach of death. It's not just life from the dead. It's life from the dead, life from deadness, spiritually as well as physically. And death will not ever again invade or touch that life, eternal life. I am the resurrection and the life. In other words, eternal life contains victory over death.

Eternal life means you're in a category of life into which death can never again enter. That's the quality of life. It's in Jesus himself. And he gives that eternal life to his people as the one who is the resurrection and the life. Now notice that he's saying, I am the resurrection and the life.

And he's anticipating there his own resurrection from the dead bodily as well, which is an important feature of the gospel, such an important aspect of what we believe. Because as he says, I am the resurrection and the life. The gospel obviously goes on to show that he rose from the dead in a remarkable way and therefore is alive forevermore. And as he anticipates that here, he is saying, I am the resurrection and the life. He's not saying I will be. I am myself. I am this in my own person. And that would be demonstrated by his resurrection, his own resurrection from the dead, of which the resurrection or the raising rather of Lazarus gives us an insight into the further meaning of that life. Life beyond the reach of death. Of course, Lazarus had to die again. He was raised to life. This side of death again, we understand. But eternal life is life beyond the reach of death. I am the resurrection and the life.

The whole idea of resurrection in the Bible is resurrection to that life. Resurrection to the life that death will never again touch. In 1 Corinthians, that great chapter that Paul in 1 Corinthians wrote on the resurrection, you find him saying there about the resurrection and about himself in relation to how he as an apostle and a preacher of the gospel doesn't have anything on which to found his ministry or the gospel itself if Jesus has not been raised from the dead. But in verse 42 through to the next few verses after that in 1 Corinthians 15, this is what Paul actually wrote, so it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. And then he says this,

Thus it is written, the first man Adam became a living being or a living soul. The last Adam became life-giving spirit. The first Adam, the first created human being, became a living soul. God breathed into him. And he became a living soul by the breath of God breathed into him. But the last Adam, that's Jesus, he became life-giving spirit. He became the one through his own resurrection from the dead, particularly, that gives life to his people. The resurrection life, the eternal life, that they, by faith, anticipate and look forward to. I am the resurrection and the life. Well, why does it matter?

[11:17] Why is this so important? Why are we saying it's foundationally important to what we understand the gospel to be and this eternal life to be and the Christian hope to be? Well, because it's basic to the Christian faith and to the gospel. You remove, as I was saying to the children, remove the resurrection of Christ and you don't have a gospel. You don't have the good news.

You don't have the message of victory over death. Death still reigns. That's all there is, just bleakness and darkness. And that's Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15. If this is not true, then gospel preaching is foolish. And if this is not true, Christianity is based on the biggest ever fraud.

And of course, that's not the case. You cannot imagine these apostles, these men of God, actually concocting a story and being involved in a fraud. And anyway, there is plenty of evidence that Jesus rose from the dead because the Bible itself speaks about him appearing to many people after he was risen from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that he actually met on one occasion with over 500 disciples at once. So, these men could have gone, or anybody who really wanted to deny the story they were giving of the resurrection of Jesus, they could have gone and checked it out.

There were plenty of people that they could have checked it with, and I'm sure they did. And they would have been told, yes, I saw him. I was part of that crowd of 500. And he met with us, and he appeared, and he was indeed the Jesus whom we knew and who has risen from the dead. It's so important as a basic foundational plank of Christianity and of the gospel. But it's important too on a personal level for you and me. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, there's no basis for your own personal hope.

There's nothing to put your faith and trust in. Otherwise, it's just a story. And all you end up with is somebody who lived a very good life and died the death of the cross that's described in the gospels, and that's it. There's nothing else to it. That's not the gospel. That's not the good news that Jesus has sent to us and the God has sent to us in Jesus. It's that he died on the cross, and three days later, he rose from the dead, and he rose triumphantly as the resurrection and the life that he is in himself. I'm going to quote a few lines from another great song of Ellie Holcomb, Christian songwriter.

[14 : 17] Songs are really packed with meaning personally and also theologically. This is a song called, I will never be the same. And this is what she says in the song, when you rolled a stone away, when you walked out of the grave, you were standing in the light of day, and everything changed.

You said, do not be afraid. You were scarred to heal the pain. You defeated death and shame, and everything's changed. Everything's changed. And when I mess it up, you say, your love's enough.

You say, you'll never leave or forsake me. And when I come undone, you are the only one to say, you'll hold me now and forever. I am the resurrection and the life. That's his assertion, and that's why it matters. But then secondly, here's an assurance given by Jesus against death.

And verse 25, first part of it, he says, I'm the resurrection and the life. Then he says, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. And he asks the question, do you believe this? Now, the first part of it is, whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. What is he dealing with there? He's dealing there with the fact of death physically, the fact that we will die, that our body will return to the dust. And what he's saying is, whoever believes in me, and of course, you know that believing in Jesus is more than just believing about him, believing certain things to be true about him. Believing in Jesus means trusting in him, putting your trust in him, your faith in him, putting your life in his hands, in other words. That's believing in Jesus. Whoever believes in me, he says, though he dies, though it is true that we experience death, our soul and body separated then, and our body laid into the dust. Yet shall he live. Because there's such a thing as resurrection for the Lord's people as well. There's resurrection for everybody physically, but he's dealing here with those who believe in him. Those who believe in him, though dying, yet shall he live. A reference to that resurrection body, that resurrection when God will bring us from the grave. In fact, in John 5,

Jesus himself talks in a way that shows he has authority to do this as well. In John 5, and at verse 28, he says, do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice. That's the voice of the Son of Man. The Son is Jesus himself. Will hear his voice and will come out those who have done good to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation or judgment. There are two groups. All of humanity will rise from the dead. Those who have believed in Christ, who have placed their lives in his hand, will rise unto life. Those who have not will be raised to condemnation. Now, the Bible mentions both. And it's important that we take account of both.

[17 : 58] But the Bible overwhelmingly emphasizes resurrection unto life, because God is concerned with life. God is concerned that you and I have life. God is concerned that the gospel that he has sent to us is believed by us, and that Jesus of the gospel, who is the resurrection and life in himself, that he will be embraced by us, so that we will live and live and have this eternal life for ourselves. The eternal life which begins in this world the moment you come to know Jesus as your Savior. The moment you come to know that he is the resurrection and life for you.

And that eternal life is crowned in its fullness after the resurrection, when we come into resurrection life, where death will never again invade our experience.

And Jesus says, the voice of the Son of Man, the Son of God, will raise, will cause the dead to be raised, will cause the dead to be raised. Some to life and some to condemnation. Everyone here knows the gospel.

No reason why anybody here should be raised to condemnation. It's a terrible thought, but a very real one. That some who knew the gospel, who heard about this eternal life, who are presented with this Jesus in the gospel, to whom Jesus himself spoke through his word, and whose spirit convicted their conscience, will nevertheless die without faith in Christ, and will be raised to condemnation.

Don't be taken in, please, by the accounts you have and the stories you hear about death being the last experience, the end of it all. Death doesn't have the final word. Thankfully, God does.

[20 : 01] It lies with God and resurrection, triumph in Christ. Some people vainly hope that when they die, that's it.

They've escaped judgment. God will never catch up with them. Remember, there's resurrection. There's a resurrection to life, and resurrection to condemnation.

See to it, please, that you are among those who are raised to life. That you know Jesus for yourself as the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And then he goes on to say, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. He's not just saying, there is such a thing as resurrection.

We shall be raised in terms of our bodily resurrection. And then we will be on the other side of death. There is that to it, but he's saying, whoever lives and believes in me.

[21 : 07] See, he's combining there, living and believing in me. You cannot live in the spiritual sense without believing in Jesus. But believing in Jesus, trusting in Jesus, means you have this life.

You do live in him. You have this life from him. And then he says, shall never ever die. That's really how it literally is.

Whoever lives and believes in me shall never ever die. Of course, when we leave this world as Christians, even before the resurrection, we enter into life with Jesus.

The thief on the cross. One of the prime examples in the Bible of that, when Jesus said to him on the cross, today, I'm telling you, surely, truly, I say to you, today, you will be with me in paradise.

You will be with me in life in heaven. But that's this side of the resurrection. The thief's body still has to be raised from the ground to be rejoined to his soul.

[22 : 17] So that completely, in that completeness of his humanity, he will enjoy eternal life with Christ. That's how it is for all who believe.

They will be raised, as we read in Corinthians 15, raised incorruptible, raised in power, raised to be with Christ forever.

In other words, the emphasis there in eternal life is not so much on the duration of it, that it goes on forever without end.

That is true of it. But what eternal life really means, essentially, is in terms of quality rather than duration. It is life, as we said already, into which death will never again invade and is beyond the reach of death completely.

It's eternal life in its quality. It's life above death. It's life with victory. And you notice Jesus is saying, whoever lives and believes in me, everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

[23 : 26] Everyone. Nobody's left out of those who believe. Everyone who lives and believes in me.

Shall never die. I am the resurrection and the life. He said that's his great assertion. And then he comes to this assurance that he gives to those who believe.

Yes, they shall die, but yet they will live. Through resurrection they will come into fullness of life. And whoever lives and believes in me, everyone who lives and believes in me, shall never, ever die.

Just re-emphasize in the fact that death will never claim them. They will never be subject again to death. But then he asks a question of Martha, and of you and of me too.

Do you believe this? Do you believe this? It's an assurance of resurrection to life.

[24 : 30] It's an assurance of eternal life. But it's an assurance requiring faith in Christ on our part. Do you believe this?

He asked her. We'll see her answer in a moment. But just let that question dwell in your own mind. Do you believe this? It's asking you more than, do you believe this to be true, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, that he is the Savior of all who believe.

Yes, that's true. That's not what it's asking. It's going beyond that. It's asking, do you believe this for yourself so that you have this life for yourself?

Do you believe this in a way that has come to know this resurrection and the life in Jesus for yourself? And the answer she gave, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world.

And her answer really is pretty much to the effect of saying, Lord, if this is true of you as it is, that you are the resurrection and life and the life, and I do believe that, then it must follow that you alone are the Savior, that you alone are the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior, coming into the world to that purpose.

[25 : 57] Nobody else could be the resurrection and life and not be the Savior, and not be the one promised in the Old Testament Scriptures for which the world was waiting, or for which the Jews at least were waiting, for the Messiah to appear.

Now that he's here and speaking to this woman, Martha, and saying to her, Do you believe this? Have you really embraced the fact that this is who I am? Yes, Lord.

I believe that. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. I believe that you must be the Savior, seeing this is who you are, and this is what is true about you.

He didn't ask the question, Do you understand this? He didn't ask the question, Are you able to take this in? Are you able to comprehend what I've just said in this great assertion and in this assurance?

Are you able to understand that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you know how that really is the case? That's not what he's asking. He's asking, Do you believe this?

[27 : 12] And she says, Yes, Lord, I believe. There's much she didn't understand, much she had yet to learn, just as the apostles did. There's much about the resurrection that you and I don't yet understand.

There's much about Jesus as the resurrection and the life that we cannot comprehend, but what he's asking us today is not, Do you understand this? Are you able to comprehend it to the extent that you embrace me and now actually live and believe in me?

He's saying, No, do you believe this? Do you believe it trustingly? Do you believe it for yourself savingly? Do you believe it as the ground of your hope?

We all have a hope today of some kind. Every human being hopes, even those today in despair, have some element of hope that somehow one day things will get better, that things will be turned round, that things will improve, that the darkness will recede, that daylight will appear.

But if it's not a hope based on the resurrection of Christ, there's no certainty that that day will never come. Here's certainty.

[28 : 36] The hope that's based on Christ as the resurrection and the life will never be disappointed, will never be put to shame. It will be fully realized in eternal life with Him.

That's what He's asking you and me today through the Gospel. Do you believe? Have you placed your confidence there? Is your hope firmly grounded on the resurrection and the life that is in Jesus, that is Jesus Himself?

Surely you and I will want to say with conviction and with sincerity and with hope, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world, and that you'll be able to say with Ellie Holcomb, When I mess it up, you say your love's enough.

You say you'll never leave or forsake me. And when I come undone, you are the only one to say, you'll hold me now and forever.

That's what the resurrection, what Jesus as the resurrection and the life does. Hold us now and forever. Hold us now and through death itself and beyond death itself and evermore in everlasting life.

[30 : 08] May he bless his word to us. Let's pray. Lord our God, we thank you today for the basis of the hope that you give to your people, that it is based upon your own resurrection from the dead, and that you are the one who alone has that capacity to give life to us so that spiritually we too have raised to life.

We bless you today for the gospel, for the hope that it brings to us, for the emphasis that in the gospel you place upon life. And we pray today, Lord, that you would grant to us that our faith and trust might truly be set upon you.

We receive our thanks, we pray again, accept our worship for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, let's conclude our worship now.

We're singing this time in the Scottish Psalter in Psalm 118. Psalm 118, and that's on page 398, Tunis Colesill.

Singing from verse 15 to verse 19, page 398. In dwellings of the righteous, has heard the melody of joy and health. The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

[31 : 31] The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. Then the psalmist says, I shall not die, but live and shall the works of God discover.

And we can rightly sing those words in anticipation of resurrection life, of resurrection unto life, where God will place his people beyond the reach of death.

So, verses 15 to 19, to God's praise. verse 15 to 19, verse 15 to 19, verse 15 to 19, in dwellings of the righteous, His hand, the melody of joy and health.

Of joy and health, the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

The right hand of the mighty Lord The right hand of the mighty Lord Exalted is on high.

[32 : 50] The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly.

I shall not die, but live and shall the works of God discover.

The Lord hath made chastise its sword, but not good death given over.

O said ye, open unto me The gates of righteousness, Then will I enter into them, And I the Lord will bless.

I'll go to the main door this morning. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

[34 : 19] Amen.