

Jesus The Resurrection And The Life

John 11:17-46

Pastor John Miller

Tonight we come to the fifth of the “I Am” statements of John’s gospel. There are seven of them, and we’re at number five. Jesus declares, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Then, we have the seventh sign or miracle as John described, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing ye might have life through his name.” We come to the seventh miracle that points to the deity of Christ. If ever a miracle pointed to the deity of Jesus Christ, it’s tonight when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

A little background and then I’m going to outline what we cover tonight as we go through. There are four sections. Remember Jesus is down by the Jordan River. He’s in what’s called Perea, which is east of the Jordan River down where John the Baptist was baptizing. His good friends Mary and Martha sent word to Him that their brother Lazarus was sick. Jesus got the message, and when He heard the message He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God,” and then He says, “Let us go...that I may awake him.” Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead, but He didn’t really fully reveal it quite yet, but the disciples said, “Master, the Jews,” in Judaea, “sought to stone thee,” if You go down there, You’re going to be in big trouble.” Jesus said, “Look, there are twelve hours in the day, if you walk in the light you will not stumble, but if you walk in the night, you’re going to stumble.” He was saying, “Look it, this is the Father’s will. This is the Father’s plan. It’s,” so to speak, “daylight.” He uses a metaphor of being in the will of God and doing the work of God, and we don’t have to worry about what people will do to us.

I believe the same is true of us today. If you are walking in the will of God, you’re doing the work of God, you’re living for the glory of God, God’s going to take care of you. Amen? You are indestructible until it’s God’s time for you to go home. Now, you don’t want to be foolish and tempt the Lord, but you want to be wise. You want to be confident that, “God, You will protect me. You will take care of me. You will watch over me if I’m walking in the light of Your will, and I’m living for Your glory,” so you don’t need to be afraid.

Finally, Jesus tells them, “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes,” so that you might see the glory of God. Thomas speaks up and says, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” That was kind of the duh, duh duh duh...the downer note of the end of the section. We stopped at verse 16.

Beginning in John 11:17, here’s how I outline this section. We see in verses 17-27 the Savior’s promise. Now, in each one of the sections, there’s going to be three of them, we see Jesus and His relationship to both Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In verses 17-27, we’re looking at Jesus and Martha, the Savior’s promise. Let’s read beginning in verse 17. “Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.” Jesus came and found that Lazarus had been lain in the grave, literally the tomb, for four days already. There was a day to get the

messenger to Jesus, Jesus got the messenger and tarried for two days, that's three days, and then He went back, that's four days. Jesus waited to where there would be a greater miracle—obvious that Lazarus was indeed dead—but this is God's timing for His greater glory. God does the same with us. He doesn't come according to our timetable. He doesn't work according to our schedule, but He does work in a way that glorifies Himself and is for our good as well as for His glory. Jesus found that Lazarus then was "lain in the grave for four days already."

Now, a little information, the Jews had a belief, and it's not really biblical, that when someone died, their spirit and soul stayed around their body for seven days; so they would have seven days of mourning. They would be by the grave, be by the body, and would weep, cry, and wail. They actually even had professional wailers. They would come and cry at your funeral and would get paid for doing that. They were actually professionals so that people would think, Wow, look how this person was loved. I don't know if you looked them up in the Yellow Pages, "We really wail. Hire us," or something like that. It seems pretty bizarre, but that's what they did. The more they wept and cried, the evidence was that they loved them. The significance was that they feel like the dead stayed around the body for seven days before it finally departed.

You know, there's a lot of people that get very sentimental and very silly when someone dies. We often will hear people use the expression, "They're with me," and so forth. I know you remember and love them, but your dead loved ones who have gone to heaven aren't really with you. The Lord is with you, and that's the important thing, but they're not kind of floating around the kitchen getting something to drink and helping themselves to ice cream and stuff like that. It's just not really happening.

Verse 18 says they were in Bethany and it "...was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off," which is about two miles to the east. We talked about the location of Bethany, the "house of figs." Verse 19, "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother." Again, this was the custom for seven days, and they would actually be in the house, go to the grave, and then be in the house. If you had someone die in your family, everyone would come to your house for a whole seven days, and you had to feed and take care of them for that whole time.

Verse 20 says, "Then, Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," then He asks Martha, "Believest thou this? 27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Martha hears that Jesus (verse 20) is coming nigh the city of Bethany. We don't know how she knew that. They didn't have cell phones. Jesus couldn't text her and say, "We'll be there in 10

minutes.” It’s possible that the messenger that came from them to Jesus went back with them, and somewhere on the trip he kind of went ahead in advance and gave them that message or that someone in the village went out and saw them coming at a distance and then ran back and told Mary and Martha. We don’t really know, but she heard that Jesus was coming and takes off from the house to go out and meet Him.

Verse 20, “Mary sat still in the house.” We chuckle a little bit because these two sisters were so different. Martha is always on the go. She’s the worker, the busy bee. She’s outgoing and always on the move. Mary is more contemplative. She’s more worshipful. We’re going to see in just a moment that Mary is always sitting at the feet of Jesus. You see that beginning to play out in this story, this interchange here, where Martha’s the one that hurries off to go meet Jesus so she could have a private conversation with Him; but Mary, sat still in the house. She might of thought, Well, someone needs to stay here with all these people that are hanging out mourning with us. If we both left, no one would be here for them.

Verse 21, “Then said Martha unto Jesus,” this is where it gets interesting, “Lord,” she called Him Lord, or Master, or Teacher, “If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” I wish I wish I wish I wish, we’ll have to ask Martha when we get to heaven, I knew what she was thinking by what she said. I wish I knew the tone and fluctuation of her voice. Now, many people for years (and I’m one of them) as you read that you think of it as Martha scolding the Lord. She says, “Lord, if You had been here my brother had not died,” almost like, “You know, it was Your fault. If You would have been here, this wouldn’t have happened.” She was coming off in a way that was very antagonistic towards the Lord or rebuking the Lord. Some feel that’s kind of in her character. She’s the one that came to Jesus and said, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve in the kitchen all by myself? Tell her to get up and help me.” It’s like, “Whoa, okay. Cool down, Martha. Calm your jets.” It could be that she was kind of upset with Jesus. I don’t know.

Another possibility, and I think it’s probably more likely, but again, I really don’t know. We know what she said, but we don’t know what she was meaning by what she said or what her thoughts were. She said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died,” that she was actually uttering that with a broken heart in faith. It was kind of a mingled attitude of, “Oh, it’s just too bad You weren’t here because we know that if You were here, he wouldn’t have died.” I want to give Martha some credit and actually say that’s more likely at what she was saying, that she somehow had faith that Jesus could’ve healed her brother before he dies and goes on to indicate, “that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Maybe she thought, Maybe if You would have been here, and she had faith in Jesus that He could’ve healed Lazarus, but she also had a lack of faith thinking that He couldn’t heal him at a distance. For that matter, the minute Jesus found out that Lazarus was sick, He could’ve spoken the word at that distance and Lazarus would have been immediately healed. Amen?

Space is not an issue for Jesus. Time is not an issue for Jesus. He’s not bound by distance. He could speak the word as He did with other cases, and He could heal at a great distance. She somehow thought that, You have to be here, Lord, and if You had been here, then perhaps

my brother had not died. No doubt, she was probably saying it with grief and a great deal of pain. When you lose somebody that you love, it's so easy to question, "Where are You, God? Why didn't You heal them? Why didn't You restore them? We prayed and asked God to heal, and they didn't get healed and died. God, where are You?" Maybe you've had the same "why" struggle, and maybe someone that you loved was taken in an unexpected death and your heart was broken and you wondered, "Lord, where were You? Why didn't You watch out for them? Why didn't You protect them? Why didn't You watch over them?" She expressed this to the Lord. The interesting thing is that Jesus doesn't really rebuke or chide her. You know, the Lord wants us to just be open with Him and pour out our hearts to Him.

Verse 22, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Again, I confess that I'm not sure what it is she thinks that Jesus could ask God to do. If she's thinking, Now You could raise him from the dead, which is a possibility. She knew that Jesus had raised two others from the dead—Jairus' daughter and the widow's son of Nain had already been raised from the dead by Jesus. For sure, Martha would have known about that, so perhaps she's saying, "Even now, whatever You ask God, He can give it to You." When she used the word "ask" in verse 22, it's a very strong word. It's actually beg or plead. "If You'll beg God, He will give it to You."

Verse 23, "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Now, take note, that's the promise that Jesus gives. When we're facing an impossibility, when we're living in the dark night of the soul, we need to stand on the promises of God. God gave her a promise, "Thy brother shall rise again." Then, "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She immediately goes off to a future time thinking of the resurrection. Martha's interesting. She has this grief mingled with faith, a little fear, a little bothered by, "Why didn't You come when we asked," or "Why weren't You here," which seems to be what she's saying, and "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee," and "Thy brother shall rise again." And she says, "I know," and she just kind of dismisses it and puts it off into a future.

I want to point out a couple things that Martha did have going in favor for her. She had her eschatology right in verse 24, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Eschatology is the theological term for the study of future things. One of the doctrines of the eschatology is that in the future we will be raised from the dead. Jesus is affirming this as well. Martha mentions it, Jesus doesn't deny or put it down. She understood that there's a future resurrection, and let me affirm tonight from the Word of God that there will be a resurrection of every single human being who has ever lived on planet earth, both saved and unsaved. We don't often think about that. We usually think about the saved get resurrected, but even the unsaved will be resurrected. The saved get resurrected to life, and the unsaved get resurrected to judgment and damnation. You will be resurrected.

When you die, nowhere does the Bible teach that you cease to exist. The Bible doesn't teach the cessation of the soul and spirit. Souls and spirits cannot die. Your body dies, but your soul and spirit does not. There will be a future resurrection. Even Job, which is the oldest book of

the Bible, said, "I know that in my flesh I will see God. Though my flesh be destroyed, one day, in my body, I will see God." Job was affirming the doctrine of the resurrection. Even, earlier in John's gospel, Jesus said that there's a resurrection unto life and there's a resurrection unto damnation. Martha was theologically right in that there is a future resurrection, but Jesus wanted to bring it back to the present, immediate, right now, and gives His famous "I Am" statement number five. In verse 25, "Jesus said unto her, I am," ego eimi, I am—not I was, not I hope to be, not I might be, not maybe I will be, "I am the resurrection, and the life." That's one of the most marvelous statements that Jesus ever made. He didn't say that, "I teach resurrection, that I may resurrect people," He says, "I am the resurrection." Again, like the door, like the Good Shepherd, like the bread that comes down from heaven, like the living water, Jesus Himself personally is the resurrection and the life.

For you to have resurrection life, you have to have Jesus Christ. You don't get resurrection life by being religious or by being good or by fulfilling rights or rituals. You get resurrection life, which is eternal life, by trusting in, believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus is personified the resurrection and the life.

In John 1:4, John says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." A few weeks ago I mentioned that science cannot explain from science where life comes from, and the answer to it is in the Bible, it comes from God. Life comes from God, and Jesus is the source of all life. Think about that. When you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you have the relationship with all life. This life is eternal life. Put it along John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," Jesus Christ, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When we think of everlasting life, we think of when you die it starts. Everlasting life doesn't start when you die, it starts when you're born again. The moment you are born again you have, present possession, everlasting life. Now, that's good news! You ought to be excited about that. If you are a Christian, you will never die. (Two people over here are excited about that. God bless you.) I'm excited about that. I'm going to go to heaven. Not just go to heaven, but right now, right here, I have the life of God in the soul of man. I've God's life in me. It's not only length of life, it's quality. It's life in a new dimension. It's spiritual life. Jesus is the resurrection; and in Him is life, and His life is the light of men.

Notice at the end of verse 25, "...he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Then, notice in verse 26, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Jesus puts this into two categories. He first talks about those who believe in Him, and they do die physically yet they will be resurrected and live spiritually. Then, in verse 26, He talks about those who are alive and believe, that they will never die. I believe that this is perfectly consistent with what Paul was teaching in 1 Thessalonians 4 when he described the rapture of the church. It starts at verse 13 and goes to verse 18 where he actually says in that passage, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep," he used the metaphor "sleep" for the believer's death, "that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope," he didn't say you don't sorrow. We're going to see Jesus weeping tonight. Sorrow is a fine thing, but it's not a hopeless sorrow.

You don't sorrow as others who have no hope, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," there's Jesus the resurrection and the life, "even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," now listen carefully, "that we which are alive and remain," we will not precede those who have died or fallen asleep, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and here it is, "and the dead in Christ shall rise first," it's called the great gettin up morning because His voice, like He raised Lazarus or resuscitated Lazarus, He will raise us from the dead. He will call us from the graves.

If you die before the rapture, you'll be with the Lord in heaven, but you're waiting for your body to be resurrected and transformed and to be reunited with your soul and spirit and have a glorified body in heaven. "Then," it says, "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up," the Greek word is *harpazo* which means to snatch up or to rapture up or to catch up by force, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Those two categories, those who die to go to heaven and then their bodies resurrected, they'll live again; and those who are believing, that will never die, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We have the dead saints resurrected and the living saints translated. How marvelous that is!

In verse 26, Jesus asks Martha that closing question, "Believest thou this?" That's the question I pose to you tonight. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again and that He is the resurrection and the life? She not only had her eschatology correct, but she also had her Christology correct, verse 27, "She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Notice what she says and understands about Jesus. She says, "You are the Lord," so she knew that He was the Lord. Secondly, "...thou art the Christ," this is the *mashiach*, the Messiah, "You're the anointed One of God." Thirdly, she said, You are, "the Son of God," so she understood His full deity. Fourthly, verse 27, "...which should come into the world," whenever the Bible speaks of Jesus coming into the world the idea is that He came from heaven and came into the world. God the Father sent Him, and He came willingly and voluntarily.

We move in verse 28 down to verse 37 to the Savior's pity. We first see the Savior's promise, "Thy brother shall rise again," and we have the same promise—we will rise again. Now, we move to the Savior's pity, verses 28-37, and we see the interaction between Jesus and Mary. It moves from Jesus and Martha to Jesus and Mary. Follow with me, verse 28. "And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister," she scurries back to the house and tells "her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." If she would have said, "Jesus is here," then the Jews would've been upset and angry. They wouldn't have gone with her, thus they wouldn't have been at the grave and seen Lazarus raised from the dead. They would have missed the miracle that brings to the head their hostility and rejection of Him. She says secretly to Mary, "The Master is come," the word "Master" is the idea of teacher, "and calleth for thee," I love that.

Verse 29, "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him," outside the city of

Bethany. "The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there." They assumed that she was going back to the grave to weep for her brother. "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him," here it is, "she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." I chuckle a little bit. Where did she get that from? Her sister. You know, it doesn't take a whole lot to spread unbelief around. Just kind of spewing your negative comments, you know, "If Jesus were here, this wouldn't have happened." She's listening to that and kind of parroting what she heard her no doubt bigger sister had said, "If you'd have been here, then our brother would not have died."

Now, it says, "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Every time we see Mary in the Bible, it seems that she's at the feet of Jesus. What a great place to be. The first time we see her at the feet of Jesus was when she was sitting there and Martha was working hurriedly in the kitchen, and she was listening to His words. The second time is here in John 11 when she's filled with sorrow and came to Him and fell at His feet. There's no better place to be than at the feet of Jesus during a time of sorrow. The third is in John 12 at the beginning of the chapter. When we get there, you'll see it. Again, Jesus is at their home and Mary takes this ointment and pours it on His feet and His head and wipes them with the hairs of her head. She is sitting hearing His Word; she's sitting, expressing her sorrow worshiping Him, and then worshiping Him again in chapter 12.

Verse 33, "When Jesus therefore saw her," Mary, "weeping," now the word "weeping" is the concept of sobbing, loud out-loud crying, sobbing or weeping or wailing. Perhaps in the news you've seen some of the funeral processions that take place in the middle east, especially among the Arabs. They're wailing and crying and crying out loud. That's what this word means, wailing or sobbing. "...and the Jews also weeping which came with her," it says that, "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Go back with me to verse 33 again. This is a section of Scripture that I wish I could adequately expound on. Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached two sermons on this verse, "Jesus wept," the shortest verse in the Bible. The Prince of Preachers, Spurgeon, actually said that no preacher can adequately expound on the depths of that which is in this text, and I agree with him, especially going back then to verse 33. Jesus saw the sisters weeping, He saw the Jews weeping, and "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." These are very strong words concerning Jesus Christ, and what we see here is His humanity mingled with His humanness, His humanity. He groaned. It means that He was feeling very deeply. The "groan" there was used of a snorting of a horse, so it was a loud, outward kind of sigh or groan. It was expressing the pain that He was feeling as He was looking around. "...he groaned in the spirit," and then it uses the word, "and was troubled," which means agitated and some even convey the idea that He was actually angry.

What was it that Jesus was groaning in spirit and troubled or angered or aggravated about? I believe that Jesus, because He was the Son of God, could look deeper and saw more than we do today. He saw what sin had brought into the world. Yes, He loved Lazarus; yes, He loved Martha and Mary; but He was actually feeling their pain and seeing what sin had done in the world. He would go to the cross, and it's actually a great parallel to the agony that He experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane as He faced the cross, where He was in agony—the same kind of hurt and pain—and prayed, “Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from Me,” and He saw that He would take the sins of the world. It's hard to convey, but Jesus saw, Jesus knew, Jesus understood; and He saw all the things that sin had brought into the world.

I believe that there's a sense that certainly we have the joy of the Lord and the hope of the Lord and we experience the goodness of the Lord, but if you know your Bible, and you know Scripture, and you know the Lord, you can't help but look at this world and be agitated and groan in spirit. Have you ever watched the news, especially lately, and just groan in your spirit? Not just out of anger toward maybe somebody that has a different political view than you do but just because of the sin in this world and the suffering and the pain that it's brought and man's stubborn rebellion against God. It think that Jesus actually...the Bible actually says that He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, so you think, Wow, Jesus had all power and all authority and knew all things and knew everything would be okay, as a matter of fact, as we enter into this section of the story, He knew that in just a few moments Lazarus was going to come out of the grave. You'd think He'd be smiling and rubbing His hands and all excited about, “You just wait to see what I'm going to pull off in just a few moments.” No. He was in agony. He was in pain.

As a pastor, I have the privilege of officiating a lot of graveside services, a lot of funerals. We have one tomorrow morning. Our dear sister, Laura, her husband has just recently gone to be with the Lord, and as you stand by the grave and look into that open casket and see the family weeping, you can't help but have a pain and grief in your heart to see what sin has brought into the world. Sin brings death, and all the suffering and the sorrow that sin brings into the world. Jesus is a man of sorrows. He's acquainted with grief, and it's because He understood what sin had done to this world. How sad it was for Him to see.

Verse 34, Jesus said, “Where have ye laid him?” Isn't it interesting that He's the Son of God, He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He knows all things, but He has to ask a question. Isn't it funny? He's going to show that He has all power in heaven and earth to raise a man from the dead, but He says, “Where did you put him?” Like, “You don't know?” Again, we have that mystery of the humanity and the deity of Christ. He was fully man and fully God, but He also brought them into the miracle that He was about to perform, “Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept.” In the English translation, this is the shortest verse in the Bible, but I think one of the most glorious in all the Bible.

The word “wept” in verse 35 for Jesus is not the same Greek word translated weeping in verse 33. In verse 33, the weeping of Mary and Martha and the Jews was a wailing. It's a loud sobbing. In verse 35, when “Jesus wept,” it meant that His eyes filled with tears and just trickled

down His cheeks. It literally conveys the idea of not loud wailing or sobbing but just tears—the Son of God in tears. God came down from heaven to earth. He is the sympathetic compassionate High Priest, and He's moved with feelings of our weaknesses. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. Yes, He loved Lazarus, but He knew He'd raise him from the dead. He's just weeping because He sympathetically felt the pain of Mary and Martha and others who loved them who were there. "Jesus wept."

It also conveys His humanity, that He was fully man, and He wept. It also conveys His sympathy and that He is sympathetic to our sorrows, our hurts, and our pains. Someone said, "In every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows had a part." Again, whenever I officiate a service and I look at the family and the pain that they're going through, I want them to understand Jesus knows and Jesus cares. He understands your pain. It also conveys His love and, I believe, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 13, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

A quick and interesting note, the Greek gods were referred to by the Greeks as being apathetic. They didn't believe that their gods could have feelings. They thought that if you had emotions or feelings or love that that meant you were under the control of someone or something else, so it was impossible for gods to have feeling. They referred to it as apatheia, we get our word "apathy" from that Greek word. What a difference Christianity brought in contrast to the Greek concept of their gods who didn't have any emotions or feelings that our God loves and cares. If you want to be really blessed, take your Concordance and run the theme of "tears" in the Bible. Trace the word "tears" through the Bible. The Bible has a whole lot to say about tears, and one of them is in the book of Revelation where it says when we get to heaven guess what God is going to do? He's going to wipe away all tears from our eyes. Isn't that awesome? Jesus came to earth and cried with us, but one day He will wipe away tears from our very eyes. What an awesome thought that is!

When the Jews beheld Him weeping, they said, "Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" again, their confusion. They question, "Could not this man," who performed miracles, "which opened the eyes of the blind," could He not have prevented this man from dying? He certainly could have. Many times when people die we have all these questions, "God, couldn't You have done this? Couldn't You have done that?" or "Couldn't You have protected them or worked it out?" You know, God's ways are not our ways. God's ways are beyond ours, past our finding out.

Now, in verses 38-44 we see the Savior's power, and we see Jesus and Lazarus. First, Jesus and Martha; then Jesus and Mary, now we see Jesus and Lazarus. The narrative just moves so wonderfully through these sections. "Jesus therefore again groaning in himself," so it repeats the statement that Jesus is groaning and He's groaning in Himself. He's agitated. "...cometh to the grave," or the tomb, "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." There are three commands that Jesus is going to give. The first one is in verse 39, "Take ye away the stone." Couldn't Jesus, if He can raise Lazarus from the dead, just

commanded the stone to roll away? That would've been a little bit more spectacular.

Now, if Steven Spielberg was doing this in Hollywood as a movie, he would have had the stone just blow into pieces and lights swirling around and everything would have been all spectacular, but kind of in a supernatural natural way, Jesus first says, "Where did you put him?" They take Him to the grave. Then He says, "Could you roll away the stone from the grave?" So, "I need to raise him from the dead, but we gotta roll away the stone." He didn't need that, but He brought in their participation. There's a lot you can say about that—there's our part and there's God's part—so He's going to do an awesome miracle, but we have a part to participate. We roll away the stone so God can manifest His power. He says, "Roll away the stone."

Verse 39, "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Now, "Martha, you just said, 'Whatever You ask God, He'll give it to you,' and now you're worried about the odor?" They didn't do embalming like we do in those days. They would bury them immediately the first day. They would just wrap them in ointment and cloths, so by four days, I mean, if you want to do another interesting thing...I did it but don't want to really give you all the details about what happens to a body left to itself at that four days. It's pretty bad. You don't want to be anywhere near a body that's just been laying around for four days. It's conveying the idea, "This dude is like super dead." I'm so glad you laughed at that. You had me scared for a minute. There's no degrees of death. Once you're dead, you're dead; but there are degrees of decay, and I'll talk about that in just a moment. So, he's dead and decayed.

When Jesus went to Jairus' house, the little girl had only been dead for just a few minutes. No decay had set in, so critics would maybe say, "Maybe He just revived her," or "Maybe she wasn't really dead." The widow's son of Nain would have been dead for just a few hours, "Well, maybe he wasn't really dead. Maybe he was just in a coma and they just woke him up." This dude is dead, so much so that "he stinketh," King James. You roll that tombstone away, you're not going to want to be around here, but verse 40, "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" so the idea that there will be a greater glory manifested. God wants to use even death in the case of the believer to bring glory to Him.

Verse 41, "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father," Abba, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Isn't it interesting, before He talks to Lazarus and raises him from the dead, He talks to His Father. Now, He doesn't ask the Father, "Is it Your will," He doesn't ask the Father, "Will You do a miracle," He just gives thanks to the Father, but He prays to His Father so that all those that are watching will hear and know that He was sent and believe in Him.

Verse 43, "And when he thus had spoken," after His prayer, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." This is the second command. The first command was roll away the stone, the second was, "Lazarus, come forth." Verse 44, "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand

and foot with graveclothes,” probably his legs were wrapped as commonly was done sometimes separately so he could walk out, “and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.” That’s the third command. Roll away the stone, Lazarus come forth, and the third command, loose him and let him go. Think about the power in the word of Jesus. This is why when Jesus descends from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, He will actually say, “Come forth,” and those that are in their graves will come out of their graves. I believe it’s true that if Jesus had not said, “Lazarus,” if He had just said at that cemetery, “Come forth,” the whole cemetery would have emptied, so He had to be specific, “Just Lazarus. We’ll get the rest of you later. Just wait.”

“Lazarus,” we’ll get you others later, “come forth,” and Lazarus, being dead, heard the voice of God. Isn’t it interesting, you can be dead and hear the voice of God? And he comes out of the grave bound with grave clothes. Now, Lazarus, strictly speaking, wasn’t resurrected, he was resuscitated, and there’s a big difference. He would have to die again, bummer. He didn’t come out of the grave in a glorified body, Jesus is the firstfruits of them that sleep. He’s the first and only One to this day who ever came back from the grave in a glorified eternal immortal body, but there’s going to be a long train of people that will follow His lead. Lazarus came forth, bound hand and foot. He had grave clothes still on him when Jesus gave this third command, “Loose him, and let him go.” He’s still bound with the grave clothes.

We close in verses 45-46 with a response. “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them,” here’s the contrast, “went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.” There’s the dividing between the belief and the unbelief—some of them believed, some of them did not believe—as indicated by, “But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.”

In John 20:30-31, “But these,” signs, “are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Some did believe, always there’s the dividing line. John’s gospel is the gospel of belief, and there are those that believe and those who do not believe.

Now, I want to wrap this up quickly by talking about the picture that’s conveyed in how God raises a sinner from being dead in trespasses and sins. Whenever Jesus healed somebody, it was an actual person with an actual disease or affliction and there was an actual, literal miracle. I’m not trying to allegorize or spiritualize it, but there’s a picture behind it. Lazarus was dead. Do you know the Bible says we’re all dead in trespasses and sins? Have you read Ephesians 2, we were in the graveyard, dead, separated from God. All sinners are dead in sin?

Secondly, Lazarus was decayed. We go headlong into deep sin. Now, every one of us are dead categorically, but some of us are more decayed. Some of us have gone longer and deeper in our sin and drifted farther from God. Thirdly, Lazarus was raised and given new life, so we who were dead in sin, we were decayed in our sin, God spoke to us and gave us new life. We were regenerated and came alive and had the life of God in our soul. Fourthly, Lazarus

was loosed. Now, this is interesting. Lazarus not only had life, but Lazarus was still bound with the grave clothes. It's a picture of the sanctified Christian life. You know you could be saved but still struggling with sin, and you will always be struggling in some way. No one's ever going to be free from sin, but He wants us to be free from bondage. He wants us to live in the freedom where Christ has set us free. It's a picture of the fact that He not only wants to save you by giving you spiritual life, but He wants to loose you from the bondage of the old grave clothes or the old way you used to live so that you're not bound by the old sinful habits of the old life. Too many times as Christians we get born again but go back to wearing our old grave clothes. God wants us to wear the "grace" clothes of the sanctified life.

Fifthly, Lazarus was a witness to others. In verse 45, "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him," others did not. So, our lives that have been resurrected by the power of God can be a witness (Amen?) to others who see what God has done. I was dead, Jesus gave me life and He set me free from the old sinful grave clothes of my past life, He's made me seated in heaven, and my life is now a witness and a testimony to His glory and His power and His majesty. Amen?