

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Resurrection of Lazarus part 2

John 11:24-44

November 20, 2005

Verse 23

- ❑ Jesus' response to Martha is profoundly simple and straightforward: "Your brother will rise again."
 - The words of Jesus most definitely have two meanings:
 1. Lazarus will be raised on *the last day* at the resurrection.
 2. Lazarus will be raised immediately from the tomb.
- ❑ This statement anticipates Jesus' final I AM statement in Verse 25.
- ❑ This is the hope of all believers.

Verse 24

- ❑ Martha's response to Jesus reflects the common belief of the Pharisees in the **future** resurrection (Acts 23:8) [Notice also that, unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees rejected the belief in a future resurrection.]
- ❑ Unfortunately, Martha's belief in the future resurrection seemed to offer her little hope and comfort in her current state of grief.
- ❑ This is because Martha's belief is in **some distant, far off, impersonal, future resurrection.**
- ❑ Yet, as Christ will reveal, the resurrection found in Himself will supercede the distant resurrection of the Pharisees.

Verses 25-26

- ❑ Jesus immediately responds to Martha with His climatic I AM (*ego eimi, ego ei mi*) statement:

I AM the resurrection and the life

- ❑ Jesus has already spoken of the future resurrection in the Gospel of John (John 5:21, 25-29; 6:39-40)
- ❑ Jesus' appears to be **personalizing** Martha's belief in the resurrection. In other words, her hope should not rest in the possibility of some distant, future resurrection; rather, it should be in Christ alone.
- ❑ The great question surrounding this verse is whether or not *resurrection* and *life* are the same things.
- ❑ Given the context, here, it appears that they are NOT EXACTLY the same.
- ❑ It appears that Jesus is referring to **TWO DISTINCT EVENTS** [in the life of Lazarus and ALL believers in the Lord Jesus Christ]:
 - FIRST, a **FUTURE RESURRECTION**:
 - First of all, Jesus seems to be affirming Martha's belief in a future resurrection, when He states, "I AM the resurrection..."
 - This is, most certainly, the resurrection spoken of in John 5:28-29: "Do not marvel at this; for an our is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, an will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."
 - Also, in John 6:39, Jesus states, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
 - SECONDLY, Jesus seems to be referring to a PRESENT RESURRECTION – **ETERNAL LIFE**:

I AM the resurrection and the life...

FUTURE [bodily] resurrection	PRESENT [spiritual] resurrection, i.e. REGENERATION; ETERNAL LIFE
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- The reason that Christ can make this statement is the He is the Great I AM, the self-existent One, the One who has "life in Himself" (John 5:26).
- Christ also says, "...AND the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."
- All who are not saved are dead in their trespasses and sins. It is not until we are born again, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the Word of God, that we can see the kingdom of God.

- Therefore, EVERYONE who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead by the One who is the resurrection and the LIFE.
 - This is why the Apostle Paul states, “But God...made us alive together with Christ...and **raised us up with Him**” (Ephesians 2:4-6). “Therefore, if you **have been raised up with Christ...**” (Colossians 3:1a).
- Further, Jesus states, “he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”
- Those who are saved by grace a through faith are raised to life THIS SIDE of eternity, and will NEVER die.
 - This is why many theologians believe that the Gospel of John emphasizes this idea of **REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY** – that eternal life begins NOW.
 - The reason we can say, with confidence, that we will never die is that it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates us and indwells us.
 - “Why then is Christ the resurrection? Because by his Spirit he regenerates the children of Adam, who had been alienated from God by sin, so that they begin to live a new life...Away now with those who idly talk that men are prepared for receiving the grace of God by the movement of nature. They might as well say that the dead walk...they who believe in Christ, though they were formerly dead, begin to live...a spiritual resurrection.”
John Calvin
 - It is very important to realize that Jesus does not simply give us life ...He IS our life. [In the same way that He does not give us righteousness...He IS our righteousness].
 - This is why the Apostle Paul states, in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;”
- The great irony in this passage is this: without the Cross, there is no resurrection. Therefore, the death and resurrection of Lazarus is, in a sense, a foreshadowing of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - After saying these things, Christ asks Martha, “Do you believe this?”

Verse 27

- Martha’s response exists as a confession of faith, not only in what Jesus has already said (that He is the resurrection and the life), but that He is the Christ, the Son of God, the One sent [by the Father] into the world.

Verses 28-29

- After Martha confessed Jesus as the Christ, she went *secretly* to Mary.

- Probably the only reason Martha did this *secretly* was because she wanted to preserve some privacy in the middle of all of the people who were gathered to mourn Lazarus' passing.
- Martha refers to Jesus as *the* Teacher, not just *a* teacher. This is significant in a day when rabbis refused to instruct women.
- Mary, then, got up quickly and went out to meet with Jesus.

Verses 30-32

- Jesus stayed near the tomb, outside the village, and this is where Mary meets Him.
- Mary has a similar response to Jesus as Martha, yet, she is certainly more emotional, as she “fell at His feet.”
- Yet, like Martha, Mary's response reveals a profound faith in the ability of Jesus.

Verses 33-35

- The Jewish custom, even for a poor family, was to hire, at a minimum, two flute players and a professional “wailing woman.” (Mishnah *Ketuboth* 4:4)
- Therefore, a number of the “Jews” who were weeping in Verse 33 were most likely professional mourners.
- Further, it was common within the Jewish culture to express grief in a loud, uncontrollable manner.
- As a result of the mourning, John states that Jesus “was deeply moved in spirit and troubled...”
 - The Greek phrase used to describe Jesus' reaction can also refer to the snorting of horses.
 - It, therefore, refers to “anger, outrage, or emotional indignation.”
- However, the question must be raised, “Why was Jesus so angry?”
- There are two possibilities that are equally likely (and a probably *both* true, to some degree):
 - **First**, Jesus was deeply angered and grieved the obvious result of living in this sinful, fallen, and depraved world: pain, suffering and, ultimately, death.

Theologian B.B. Warfield puts it this way:

“It is death that is the object of His wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death, whom He has come into the world to destroy. Tears of sympathy may fill His eyes, but this is incidental. His soul is held by rage: and he advances to the tomb, in Calvin's words ‘as a champion who prepares for conflict.’ The raising of Lazarus thus becomes, not an isolated marvel, but – as in deed it is presented throughout the whole narrative... - a decisive instance and open symbol of Jesus' conquest of death and hell.

What John does for us in this particular statement is to uncover to us the heart of Jesus, as he wins for us our salvation. Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf.” (*The Person and Work of Christ*)

- **Secondly**, Jesus was angered and deeply grieved by the manner in which the crowd was mourning the death of Lazarus. Mourning and grieving is not only natural, but even necessary one might say; however, to mourn in the manner of the pagans, who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13), is, at least in one sense, a result of unbelief in the resurrection and faithfulness of Almighty God.
- Therefore, when John states, “Jesus wept,” it is likely not simply because of Lazarus’ death [for Jesus knew He would resurrect him]; rather, it is likely for the same reasons that caused His anger and troubled spirit [i.e., living in a sinful world and the hopeless mourning of the Jews].
- The Greek word for “wept” means, simply, “to shed tears,” or “quiet weeping” – NOT the wailing of the Jewish mourners.

Verses 36-37

- Observing the weeping of Jesus, the Jews correctly conclude that Jesus loved Lazarus.
- However, their assertion reveals that they do not understand the real reason for Jesus’ tears.
- They, then, ask, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”
 - Recall, no man had ever created sight for a man born blind, except for Jesus.
 - The Jews, then, wonder why Jesus could not have *kept this man* from dying. It does not appear that they even entertain the possibility that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead...after all, he has been dead more than three days!

Verse 38

- John, once again, informs that reader that Jesus is deeply moved.
- Many first century Jews were buried in tombs that were sealed with a stone.

Verses 39-40

- Martha quickly responds to Jesus’ command to remove the stone by stating, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.”
- This statement further underscores the physical state of Lazarus...He is not only dead, He is decomposing! [The stench possibly indicates that the body was not embalmed.]
- Jesus **immediately** responds to Martha, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”
 - This statement reemphasizes Jesus point in Verse 4 that this miracle will be “for the glory of God,” or “to reveal the glory of God.”

- It is certainly no coincidence that Jesus' statement immediately follows Martha's concerning the decomposed state of Lazarus' body.
- In other words, the "deader" Lazarus is, the more powerfully the miracle will reveal the glory of God.
- This is not a resuscitation, it is a re-creation of life by the Creator Himself!

Verses 41-42

- Before Jesus resurrects Lazarus, He first prays to the Father.
- The prayer of Jesus reveals at least two significant truths:
 - First, the complete and perfect intimacy between the Father and the Son;
 - Jesus addresses the Father as "Father" not "our Father," further revealing the level of intimacy between the Father and the Son. As Leon Morris states, "His relationship to the Father is not the same as that of others."
 - Secondly, the functional subordination of the Son to the will of the Father. For, Jesus does nothing of His own accord, but He is totally obedient to the will of His Father.

Verses 43-44

- Jesus, then cried out, "Lazarus, come out!"...and "the man who had died came forth..."
- Because Jesus is "the resurrection and the life," this account is a perfect image of two events:
 1. The day when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and come out of their tombs (John 5:25, 28-29)
 2. The moment of regeneration, when those dead in their trespasses are "made alive" in Christ.
 - NOTICE: Jesus calls Lazarus **specifically, by name, and Lazarus obeys!**
- "Irresistible Grace" is a doctrine "on the unwilling." Briefly, there is no more "force" exercised in God's wondrous act of regeneration than was exhibited when the Lord Jesus cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!" Resurrection is not an action of force against will: it is the bringing of new life to the dead. (p. 69, *The Potter's Freedom*)

The term "irresistible" then must be understood as speaking to the *inability of dead sinners to resist resurrection to new life*. Since they are dead it is an empty (though often repeated) cavil to accuse this doctrine of being tantamount to "forcing" someone to be saved...One can just imagine a reporter from Jerusalem shoving a microphone in the face of the newly resurrected Lazarus and saying, "Lazarus, do you feel your rights were violated by Jesus in forcing you back to life? Did He ask you if you wanted this to happen first? Do you plan any legal action?" The bewildered Lazarus would look at the reporter and say, "Are you

kidding me? I was dead! Jesus rescued me and called me to life! Those were the most precious words I ever heard, when He called my name and said, 'Come forth! I owe everything to Him!'"

This is the testimony of every believer. Out of death Christ called us. His call did not come without power, no indeed! When Christ calls Lazarus the result is resurrection power! So it is today. When Christ the Great Shepherd calls His own, they hear His voice because He is the very source of life and He rises them up to spiritual life. It is absurd to call this gracious deliverance of the slave from the dungeon an unkind act of "force." (p. 285)

- ❑ One of the greatest examples of God's regenerative power and ability was found inside of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle.
- ❑ Numbers 17:8 states, "Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds."