

John 11:17-27

I AM the Resurrection and the Life
Do You Believe This?



All Bible Verses are in the ESV unless otherwise
noted.

© 2001–2018 Crossway.

All rights reserved.

All emphasis added are mine

- We have now seen over two-thirds of Jesus' earthly ministry.
 - Included many teachings and "signs."
 - In John 11:1-16, we saw the "introduction' to the story.
 - Seven purposes God had in ordaining the death and raising of Lazarus
- At this point, the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, expand on Jesus' teachings in Jerusalem during his final spring visit
 - (cf. Matt. 21–26)

- John presents a miracle story that encapsulates Christ's mission and fate.
 - Lazarus' story (11:1–44) sums up Jesus' career.
 - Final and ultimate sign, foreshadowing His own death and resurrection.
 - Jesus, the source of life, now gives life to Lazarus.
 - This ultimate revelation condemned, Jesus judged as worthy of death (11:50), and condemning those who do not believe!
 - Ironic parallel with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. (Luke 16:31)

- Story hints of Jesus' own passion.
 - The Lord of life will lay down his life and employ His resurrecting power to rise from the grave.
 - Unlike Lazarus, Jesus will rise with His glorified body!
 - Later in the same town of Bethany, Lazarus' sister Mary will anoint Jesus—figuratively preparing him for burial (12:3–8).
- Chapters 11 and 12 transition between two “books” within a book.
 - The events of these chapters are preparing us for John's second book, the “Book of Glory” (chaps. 13–19).

- Jesus' signs are finished, and he is advancing toward "the hour"—the hour of death, resurrection, and glory.
- The focus of passage: The Deity of Christ and the testing of our faith in Him.
 - We saw in the previous portion Jesus' omniscience as He told the Disciples the nature of Lazarus' illness and death. (John 11:4)
 - Will see His claim to being YHWH: "I AM."
 - We will also see Him present the question we all must answer:

"Do you believe this?"

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. 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." 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."

(John 11:17-27)

17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

- Prevailing Jewish belief was that the spirit did not immediately leave the deceased at the moment of death.
 - Spirit remained with the body for three days, but on the fourth-day corruption/decay would set in and the connection between body and spirit would be broken
 - Some early traditions, which may date to the first century, indicate that after three days a check would be made on the deceased to verify that they were dead!
- Two implications:
 - After four days, Lazarus was truly dead; spirit had already descended into Sheol.
 - Jesus *had* to be resurrected on the *third* day for Jewish Believers to accept that it was truly him.
 - Jesus' resurrection after only three days also fulfilled prophecy: (Psalms 16:10)

18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,
19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console
them concerning their brother.

- Bethany:
 - “suburb” of Jerusalem,
 - closer than Bethlehem, but in a different direction;
 - even closer than Emmaus!
- Family was fairly well-off (chapter 12: expensive perfume Mary anointed Jesus with)
 - Well known if “many” had come to console them

18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,
19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console
them concerning their brother.

- Important that John uses the word “Jews” to describe those who came to console Martha and Mary.
 - Almost exclusively the rulers, or at least those who were devout and opposed Jesus.
 - John the Baptizer questioned. (John 1:19),
 - Jesus cleared the temple. (John 2:18-20)
 - One of them came to Jesus at night. (John 3:1)
 - Healing on Sabbath. (John 5:16)
 - Proclaiming His deity. (John 5:18)
 - Of 50+ examples, 45, not counting those in this passage, apply to the rulers and leaders!
- Remember, Jesus had gone away across the Jordan because the “Jews” wanted to kill Him.
 - Conversation when He and His disciples heard about Lazarus: (John 11:8, 16)
- Jesus was a “wanted” man!

20 *So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.*

- Someone must have seen Jesus and the Disciples approaching the village and notified Martha, and she went and met Jesus before He entered the village.
 - Cautious about appearing in public so close to Jerusalem,
 - Might be “Jews” around because of the family’s status.
 - More evidence in verse 28: Martha tells Mary about Jesus’ arrival “in secret.”
- Example to His disciples of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (chapter 10)
 - To them:
 - Jesus has chosen to risk death in Judea to save His friend from death.
 - He appears willing to lay down his own life for the life of *one* of His sheep
- God’s love for us is a *personal* love of the *individual*, not just for the flock as a group.

21 *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

- Martha speaks to Jesus and makes a statement that commentators have viewed in different ways.
 - Expressing some angst that Jesus had not come sooner.
- Or
- Just making a statement that shows her belief in Jesus as a healer.
 - Lazarus would have been dead before Christ arrived; second interpretation appears to make more sense.
 - She may have been hoping He would come before Lazarus got worse.
 - All to show God's sovereignty, just like Jesus' healing of the man born blind. (John 9:2-3)
- Martha missing the idea that Jesus isn't just a great healer;
- "Great Physician" could have healed Lazarus without even going to Bethany.

22 even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

- Martha displayed her faith with this statement, as imperfect as that faith was: (John 11:22)
- Repeats her mistake about Jesus' identity and nature.
 - Sees Him like one of the Old Testament Prophets.
 - Doesn't see Him as the One who has the power of life in Him.
- Greek word αἰτέω (to entreat, beg, supplicate); implies a distinction in position and circumstances between the parties, and expresses a petition from an inferior to a superior. *Never used by Christ to the Father*
- Contrast with ἐρωτάω (to ask for information, to question as well as supplicate); implies familiarity if not equality. *Never used of our prayers to the Father, always used by Christ to the Father*
- Jesus turns weakness in Martha's faith into an opportunity to show that He was sent by the Father: (John 11:41-42)

23 *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*
24 *Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

- Jesus' vague statement seems to be intended to draw out her understanding of who He is and His power.
 - Verse thirty-nine will show us that Martha still doesn't have the full picture of who Jesus is
- Displays the prevailing Old Testament understanding of the future Resurrection, doesn't indicate Jesus' authority over life and death.

25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever
believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you
believe this?"*

- True focus of this passage!
 - Fifth of His "I Am" statements: (John 6:35; 8:12, 58; 10:9, 11)
 - All tied back to burning bush where YHWH revealed Himself to Moses: (Exodus 3:14)
- Jesus also takes us back to the early chapters of John's Gospel with His statement in our passage, "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": (John 1:4, 12-13; 3:18, 36)

25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever
believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you
believe this?"*

- Discussion at the end of John chapter six: (John 6:66-69)
 - Peter declared that the disciples "had come to know" that Jesus is the "Holy One of God," or Messiah.
 - One of them was going to betray Him.
 - Peter would deny Christ three times!
- Next verses a warning for Martha: "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." (John 6:70-71)
- Events prove head knowledge, not heart knowledge; Martha suffered from that same incomplete understanding.

25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever*
believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
26 *and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you*
believe this?"

- Go back to the very beginning of Jesus' ministry: Peter's first awareness of Christ: (John 1:40-41)
 - Andrew, who "brought Peter to Christ," able to give a more confident answer to the question: "Do you believe this?"
 - Eventually, though, even Andrew's confidence would be shattered when Jesus was arrested and crucified.
- We must be cautious about our "knowledge" when our expectations of what Christ "should" do or be aren't fulfilled!

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

- Martha gives the correct answer: "Yes!"
- She responds that she believes is the second statement Jesus made.
- She calls Him "Christ" and "the Son of God," too!
 - Shows some awareness of His being the true Messiah
 - Implications of His titles, "Christ," or "Son of God" don't seem to have sunk in, yet.
- She sees Him as a "super" Prophet.
 - Understanding of the role of the Messiah not clear; typical of 1st century Jews.
 - Neither is her view of Jesus as the "Son of God."

She doesn't see Him as God-the-Son!

She still has the Old Testament view of the Messiah!

27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

- Jesus is not just “*The Prophet*” promised to Israel: (Deuteronomy 18:18)
- Moses was an example of what Jesus would be, but not the real thing.
 - Moses led the people of Israel out of bondage, like Jesus has done for those who are born again and will do for you if you will answer His call.
 - Moses brought *them* out of slavery to Egypt; Jesus leads *us* out of slavery to sin.
- Jesus is not the conquering warrior that the Jews hoped would overthrow the Romans.
- Jesus responded to Peter’s acknowledgement of Jesus as the Christ by intimating that His victory would be spiritual, not temporal: (Matthew 16:13-18)
- The Jews were looking for a military, political leader who would restore the glory of the days of David and Solomon.
- Jesus established His kingdom on earth, overthrowing, not the Romans, but Satan and his minions.

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

- *The crucial point in our passage.*
 - We are often no different than Peter, Martha or the Jews!
 - We often fail to realize that this passage has much greater implications.
 - They, and we, fail to see Jesus as YHWH, God!
 - We see Him as someone who will meet our "felt needs."
 - *They* recognize His favored position with the Father but fail to see His status as God-the-Son!
 - We see Jesus take our requests for things to meet those felt needs to the Father and, because of His favored position, be granted what we ask for.

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

- Like Martha, we believe we know Jesus and who He is, but do we truly know Him?
 - Do we know that He is capable of miracles of which we cannot even dream?
 - Do we know that He is capable of miracles that only God can do because He is God?
- Do we know that it was Jesus who created the universe; has the power of life and death in His hand; rules over all of His creation with a rod of iron, yet is the sacrificial lamb that not only pays the debt we owe for our sins, but credits His righteousness to our account?

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

- Summary, what we have seen:
 - Martha's initial statement of belief in Jesus' ability to heal.
 - Faith, as weak as it is, that He can ask anything of God-the-Father and it will be granted.
 - Jesus declare that He has the power of life and death.
- Finally, we have seen Martha's response to that greatest of all questions: "Do you believe this?"
 - Answer based on incomplete revelation.
 - What the Jews taught from the Old Testament.
 - Jesus' miracles.
 - Heard Him declare that He *was* the resurrection and the life!
 - Had yet to see Jesus exercise His power over death by raising her brother.

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

- We have a much more complete revelation!
 - We have the entire Word of God.
 - We have the evidence of the empty cross and the empty tomb.

So, how would you answer that question?

Will your answer be “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in Him, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die!

Do *you* believe this?"

Do you *believe* this?