

Jesus – “I am....”⁴ – The Resurrection and the Life

Reading: John 11:25 “.... *I am the resurrection and the life* ¹.....”

Introduction:

This is the fourth lesson in the series on the “*I am*” statements made by Jesus in the gospel of **John**. The aim of these lessons is for us to learn more about the nature and attributes of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had performed many signs and miracles. The apostle John recorded some of these events in his gospel in order to convince the reader that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God (**John 20:30-31**). Some of these miracles included turning wine into water (**John 2:1-11**), feeding 5000 people with just 5 loaves of bread and two fish (**John 6:1-14**), and healing people of their diseases (**John 4:46-54; 5:1-9; 9:1-11**). But in **John 11**, we have the account of Jesus performing what is probably the most convincing miracle of all – raising Lazarus from the dead. It was in this context that Jesus made the statement, “*I am the resurrection and the life*” (**John 11:25**).

LESSON

1) Jesus’ relationship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus

Although we don’t meet Lazarus until **John 11**, there is an earlier account where Jesus had spent time with his sisters, Mary and Martha. In **Luke 10:38**, Jesus and His disciples had entered a village, most likely Bethany², as that is where Mary and Martha lived (**John 11:1**). Martha welcomed Him into her house and busied herself with the house chores. But Mary had used the opportunity to learn from Jesus, and had sat at His feet listening to Him (**Luke 10:39-42**). This was the time when Jesus had said, “*Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part,*”

There was another occasion (apart from **John 11**) where we read about Jesus being with Mary and Martha. Just before the Passover at the time of His death on the cross, Jesus was again in Bethany (**John 12:1**), this time to the house of Simon (see **Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3**)³. It was on this occasion that Mary anointed Jesus with very expensive spikenard oil and wiped His feet with her hair (**John 12:3**). This act showed the close relationship between Jesus and this family.

2) The death of Lazarus

John 11 opens with the fact that Lazarus was sick (vs.1). John doesn’t say what the sickness was, but it must have been something very serious, for Lazarus ended up dying from it (e.g. **John 11:17**). But when He was told about Lazarus, Jesus stayed where He was for another two days (vs.6). Now while this “staying put” may have seemed a strange thing for Jesus to do, we can see later that there was a very good reason for it (vs.15, 40, 42).

¹ All biblical quotes are from the New King James Version Bible.

² Bethany is located about 3km south east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho.

³ The incident with the anointing of oil and the response from others about the cost links **Matthew 26:6-11** and **Mark 14:3-7** with **John 12:2-8**.

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By the time Jesus approached Bethany, Lazarus had already died and had been buried in the tomb for four days (vs.17). There were many Jews still providing comfort at the home where Mary and Martha were grieving (vs.19-20). But word came to Martha that Jesus was coming, so she left the house to meet Him (vs.20). When she met the Lord, she told Him that if He had been there, He could have saved Lazarus from death (vs.21) – such was her faith in Jesus. But even at this point, even though Lazarus was dead, she still believed that Jesus could do something with God’s help (vs.22).

Jesus then told her that her brother would rise again (vs.23). Martha understood this to mean that Lazarus would rise again on the last day, when there will be a general resurrection of all from the grave (vs.24)⁴. Jesus then made the statement which is the subject of this lesson,

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (vs.25).

I want us to notice two things from Jesus’ statement;

- a) Jesus said, “*I am*”, not “*I will be*”. If He had said that “*I will be*”, then that would mean that He could not offer life now, but at some-time in the future. By saying “*I am*”, which is present tense, it means that you can have the promise of eternal life right now (if you believe in Him and obey Him – **John 3:16; Hebrews 5:9**).
- b) The second thing is this. Even though we will die physically, we will still live spiritually. We are, essentially, spiritual beings. Our physical bodies are only temporary (**Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Ecclesiastes 12:7⁵**). Our souls, our spiritual nature, will live on after physical death to face the judgement, and then to our final destiny (**John 5:28-29; Hebrews 9:27**) – the parable Jesus taught in **Luke 16:19-31** shows this to be true. The French philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said it this way;

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”⁶*

After this conversation with Jesus, Martha went back to the house and discretely told Mary that Jesus was near and had called for her (vs.28). When Mary came to Him, she, like her sister, confessed her faith that if He had been there at the time, He could have prevented Lazarus from dying (vs.32). However, the Jews who came with her appear to have questioned Jesus’ turning up “late”;

“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?” (vs.37)

3) Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead

We see in both verse **33** and **38** that Jesus “*groaned in the spirit and was troubled*” and “*groaned in Himself*”. The word “groaned”⁷ (or “deeply moved”) used here means “to have indignation against”, or even “anger”. The word (or term) “deeply troubled”⁷ means “to be shaken”, or “agitated”. The possibility is

⁴ Refer **John 5:25, 28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**.

⁵ See also **2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 2 Peter 1:13-14**.

⁶ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/p/pierreteil160888.html>

⁷ Strong’s Concordance, Greek words 1690 and 5015 respectively.

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that Jesus was upset because His motives for delaying His coming were being questioned by Martha and Mary, and also the Jews who were present. That is, if He hadn't delayed in coming, then He could have prevented Lazarus from dying and spared all this grieving and loss⁸. But as we saw earlier in verses **4** and **15**, Jesus had reason for delaying – that the glory of God may be seen.

Nevertheless, Jesus was taken to the tomb where Lazarus was buried (vs.**34, 38**). When Jesus commanded that the stone blocking the entrance be rolled away, Martha was concerned about smell to be expected from someone who had been dead for four days (vs.**39**). But Jesus reminded her that she was about to see the glory of God, and so the stone was rolled away (vs.**40-41a**).

Jesus prayed to God, partly for the benefit of the crowd. What He was about to do was to prove to them that He was indeed sent by the Father (vs.**41b-42**). He then called Lazarus from the tomb (vs.**43**). Lazarus, who had been dead and buried for four days, rose up and came out of the tomb, wrapped in his grave clothes (vs.**44**). Jesus then commanded those present to help him. Having seen this miracle, many of the Jews present believed in Jesus (vs.**45**).

4) Application for us

There are two applications that I want to make from this event.

a) We can have resurrection and life through Jesus

Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life”*. When we “resurrect” something, it usually means that we restore something that was once good and useful, but has since fallen into decay or disuse. We set about removing the rust and/or decay, and then bring it back to what it was always meant to be. For example, if we were restoring an old broken wooden chair, we would fix up what was broken, sand back the flaking paint or polish, and apply a new finish coat to make it like brand new.

Jesus does the same thing with us. We were all once “brand new”, innocent children (**Matthew 19:14**). But at some point in our lives, after we had reached an age where we were accountable for our decisions and actions, we gave in to temptation and sinned (**Romans 3:10, 23**). This led us to be *“... by nature children of wrath ...”*, which alienated us from God (**Ephesians 2:2-3, 12**). Spiritually, we were dead, broken, stained and soiled, just like the broken down old wooden chair.

But Jesus offers us new life (**John 10:10**). He can restore us from our broken selves to become that which is good and holy. Because of His sacrifice, the stain of all our sins, both past and present, can be completely removed so that we can stand before God clean and whole and without spot (**Colossians 1:22; 1 John 1:7**)⁹. And we can have that new life right now (**Romans 6:4**).

Yes, there will be a resurrection at the end of time (**1 Corinthians 15:50-53**), but if you are not a Christian, you can have a resurrection to new life this very day by obeying the gospel (**Acts 2:37-38; Ephesians 2:1, 5-6**).

⁸ When Jesus cried (vs.**35**), He would not have been grieving for Lazarus, because He knew that He was about to raise him from the dead. However, His tears may have been out of sympathy for the distress of Martha and Mary.

⁹ This does not take away our need to be faithfully obedient – **Colossians 1:23; 1 John 1:7**.

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b) Sometimes, God allows things to happen for our ultimate benefit, even if we don't realise or understand it at the time.

From Mary and Martha's perspective, they would have wanted Jesus to come to Bethany as soon as He was told about Lazarus being sick. They probably wondered why He didn't come straight away and prevent Lazarus from dying.

But as we can see from this event, God had something much more glorious in mind. Not only would Lazarus be restored to life and returned to his sisters, but this miracle demonstrated at least two other important things;

- that Jesus was indeed sent from the Father (vs.42), and,
- that Jesus/God has power over death (vs.43-44).

It also resulted in many Jews believing in Jesus when they saw it (vs.45).

Sometimes, things in life don't go the way that we would like them to - we can even find ourselves suffering and don't know why these things are happening to us. Now I don't have the answers to many of these things, but some things I do know from the scriptures that can help in such times.

(i) Proverbs 19:21 *“There are many plans in man's heart, nevertheless, the Lord's counsel – that will stand.”*

God is in control. He is not the source of evil (**1 John 1:5; James 1:17**), but it seems that sometimes He allows evil to happen to fulfil His purposes. For example, God allowed evil men to unjustly crucify His innocent Son (**Matthew 27:15-35**), but in doing so, He was able to make it possible for us to have forgiveness of sins (**Ephesians 1:3-14; Hebrews 10:4**). Evil men at that time thought that they were in control, but it was actually God carrying out His plan.

(ii) 2 Timothy 2:19 *“... the Lord knows who are His”*

As Christians, we are His children (**Galatians 4:4-5**). He has promised us that He will never leave nor forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**) – we are not alone. He knows exactly what is going on in our lives (**Psalms 139:1-12**). He will not forget us, nor will He forget the things that we do in His name (**Hebrews 6:10**). He is with us.

(ii) Romans 8:28 *“.... all things work together for good to those who love God”*

Because we are His children, God wants what is good and best for us. Just as an earthly father has the responsibility for training up his children in the way that they should go (**Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4**), so too does God want to train His children. Consider **Hebrews 12:9-11** – His discipline is for our profit. One of the ways that God may train us is to allow us to be in circumstances that give us an opportunity to grow in the fruit of the Spirit. For example, we read in **2 Corinthians 1:8** that Paul faced a lot of trouble in Asia. But from that experience, he learned about putting his trust in God (vs.9-10).

The point is this. We need to continue steadfastly in doing what God wants us to do (**1 Corinthians 15:58**), and while doing so, put our trust in Him that He is working things out for our good, even if it may not appear so at the time (**2 Corinthians 4:17**).