

John 11:25
“I am the resurrection and the life”

Introduction

A. Jesus interacts with His disciples (1-16)

1. Jesus learns that Lazarus is sick (READ 1-3)
2. Jesus makes six statements regarding Lazarus' sickness (READ 4-16):
 - a. #1: His sickness would not ultimately end in Lazarus' physical death: **“This sickness is not to end in death...”** (4)
 - b. #2: The event surrounding his sickness would glorify God the Father: **“but for the glory of God...”** (4)
 - c. #3: The primary purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to glorify Jesus **“so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”** (4)
 - d. #4: Lazarus was already dead (7-11):
 - 1) **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep...”** (11)
 - 2) **“Lazarus is dead”** (14)
 - e. #5 Jesus would raise him from the dead (11): **“but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.”**
 - f. #6: This event would bolster the disciples' faith (15): **“...and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”**
 - 1) Jesus claims that He was **“glad for your sakes”** that He had not been with Lazarus when he fell ill (presumably because He would have been able to heal him rather than raise him from the dead—the greater miracle)
 - 2) What did Jesus mean by, **“so that you may believe”**?
 - a) This is an odd statement in light of the fact that the disciples already believed in Him
 - John describes their belief in 2:11: **“This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him”**
 - The disciples had given up everything to follow Him
 - Earlier in John's Gospel we saw Peter declare, **“We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God”** (John 6:69)
 - On another occasion, Peter declared, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (Matthew 16:16)
 - We also see Thomas in the very next verse (16) willing to give up his own life and risk death to accompany Jesus to Judea
 - b) Leon Morris, in his commentary, “The Gospel According to John,” suggests that the use of the aorist subjunctive here points to the maturing of the disciples faith, i.e. that faith has a progressive element to it from an immature faith to a more mature faith
 - c) As such, Jesus knew that raising Lazarus from the dead would serve to bolster the disciples faith in Him as the Son of God

B. Jesus interacts with Martha (17-27)

1. When Jesus arrives in Bethany Martha comes out to meet Him (READ 17-20)
 - a. Lazarus has been dead and in the grave for four days (1):
 - 1) This may be important because Jews believed that the spirit stuck around near the body for three days after a person died, potentially to re-enter the body
 - 2) Four days in the grave meant that Lazarus was **really** dead
 - b. Mary stayed behind at the home where she was comforted by visitors

2. Martha greets Jesus with an expression of faith (21-22):
 - a. She expresses regret over His not being there when Lazarus fell ill (21): **“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”**
 - 1) Some see this as a rebuke of Jesus for waiting two days and not coming sooner
 - 2) However, the time table indicates that Lazarus died before the messengers reached Jesus and Martha likely knew this (i.e. on day 1 messengers were sent to Jesus with news that Laz was sick. After they left, Laz died without their knowledge. Jesus waits two days, then travels on the fourth day to Bethany to find Laz had died four days earlier)
 - b. Martha’s second statement is a bit more difficult to understand, but should also be understood as an expression of faith (22): **“Even now, I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”**
 - 1) Some see in this statement a believe by Martha that Jesus could still heal Lazarus even though he was dead
 - 2) That seems unlikely from what follows when she misunderstands Jesus’ promise to raise Lazarus as a reference only to the future, spiritual resurrection
 - 3) This statement might better be understood as **“even now, though you weren’t here, I still believe that God gives you whatever you ask”**

3. Jesus responds to Martha with two promises, a declaration and a question(READ 23-27):
 - a. The first promise is that her brother will be healed and physically rise from the dead (23-24):
 - 1) **“Your brother will rise again.”**
 - 2) Martha misinterprets Jesus promise as a reference to spiritual resurrection and eternal life: **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”**
 - b. He declares, **“I am the resurrection and the life...”** (25):
 - 1) We know that Jesus is referring to spiritual resurrection because this declaration is in response to Matha’s statement regarding resurrection on the last day
 - 2) Notice that Jesus doesn’t merely say that He gives eternal life here, but rather that He **“IS”** the resurrection and the life:
 - a) John 1:4: **“In Him was life, and the live was the Light of men.”**
 - b) Romans 8:11: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to you mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”**
 - c) Colossians 1:28: **“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”**
 - d) Colossians 3:4: **“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”**

- e) 1 John 5:20: **“And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”**
- c. His second promise is that all who believe in him will live forever spiritually (25b-26): **“he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.”**
- d. He asks Martha whether or not she believes it (26): **“Do you believe this?”**
- e. Martha responds emphatically (27): **“Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”**
- 1) She uses the Greek “ego” (I) which adds emphasis: “I believe”
 - 2) She uses the perfect tense: “I have come to believe”
 - 3) She declares that he is the Messiah, and the Son of God, and the promised Deliverer (i.e. the one who comes into the world)
 - 4) NOTE: even with such an emphatic response, Martha still did not envision that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead (see 11:39)

C. Jesus interacts with Mary (28-37)

1. After speaking with Jesus, Martha returns to Mary and informs her that Jesus would like to meet with her (28)
2. Mary, along with the Jews that were comforting her, goes out to meet Jesus (29-31)
3. Her first words to Jesus were the same as those of Martha (32): **“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”**
 - a. This is a recurring theme, as it is repeated by Martha, Mary and the Jews (11:37)
 - b. These statements seem to indicate a belief that while Jesus could have done something while Lazarus was still alive, there was nothing He could do now that Lazarus was dead
 - c. However, many had already witnessed Jesus raise two others from the dead:
 - 1) The Widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:13-15): this appears to have been witnessed by Jesus’ disciples and a large crowd
 - 2) The daughter of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue (Luke 8:49-56, Mark 5:42; Matthew 9:25): Jesus only permitted Peter, John and James, as well as the mother and father, to witness the miracle and instructed them to tell no one
4. During this interaction with Mary we also see something else:
 - a. Jesus was troubled when He saw Mary and the others weeping:
 - 1) **“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled”** (11:33)
 - 2) **“Jesus wept”** (35)
 - 3) **“So, Jesus again being deeply moved within...”** (38)
 - 4) The word (moved) in 33 and 38 implies a loud, inarticulate and emotional response to something and is sometimes translated as moved, disturbed, anger, and even fear
 - b. But what was He troubled by?
 - 1) Some have argued that he was troubled by the death of Lazarus, but that is unlikely because He knew He would raise up Lazarus
 - 2) Other argue that he was sad to see the anguish and mourning that Lazarus’ death caused to Mary, Martha and the others

- 3) Another explanation, and maybe a more likely one, is that Jesus was disturbed over the lack of faith He witnessed in His disciples, Mary, Martha and the Jews. The Son of God was standing before their very eyes, the very one who could do ANYTHING they asked including raising Lazarus, but they were mourning his death believing that it was too late, even for Jesus
- 4) Compare this to Jesus weeping over Jerusalem for their lack of faith (Luke 19:41-44)

D. Jesus interacts with the Father and raises Lazarus from the dead (38-46)

1. As we come to the conclusion of this passage, we realize the purpose of Lazarus' death (just as Jesus told his disciples earlier)
2. When Jesus arrives at the tomb and asks for it to be opened, we see again (through Martha's objection) that it's been four days (38-39)—there was no question that Lazarus was dead!
3. Jesus repeats what He told his disciples in v. 11:4, and apparently what He shared with Martha, that they were about to see **"the glory of God."**
4. Jesus then prays aloud to the Father for the sake of His audience that they might:
 - a. **"know that you always hear me"** (42)
 - b. **"that they may believe that You sent Me"** (42)
5. Jesus then raises Lazarus from the dead (43-44)
6. Many who witnessed the miracle believed in Him (45)

Conclusion

1. Lazarus' death served a purpose
2. That purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus was sent by God (i.e. the promised one from the OT) and was the proof that He had power over death
3. As such, it served as the proof that He could raise up to eternal life those who believe in Him