

Fil-Am Community Church
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5 February 2012
I am the Resurrection and the Life
John 11:21-26

If death ends all, then evil must be good, wrong must be right, and beauty ugliness. God is a Judas who betrays his Son, And with a kiss, damns all the world to hell--If Christ rose not again.

That haunting poem was penned by an unknown soldier killed in WWII. Its tone almost reminds us of Paul's reasoning in 1 Cor. 15:12-19 which begins, *"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"* and closes *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."*

Job, writing several thousand years ago articulated a question that has bothered mankind for centuries: *"If a man dies, shall he live again?"* (Job 14:14)

Human beings are fascinated by the mystery of death. Rodin, the French master sculptor best known for "The Thinker," attempted to capture the emotions provoked by the first human death in a sculpture of Adam and Eve embracing the dead body of their son Abel. Instead of reflecting pain and sorrow, their faces seem inquisitive about the mystery of death.

Curiosity about death has persisted throughout the ages. And even more than this--a curiosity about life after death. As a background leading up to our text, allow me to summarize what has taken place so far:

Jesus is sent word that his dear friend Lazarus, the brother of both Mary and Martha, has become ill.

After hearing of Lazarus' illness Jesus stayed where He was for two days, and then, along with His disciples, headed for Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters lived. When they arrived in Bethany they were given the sad news that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Many had come to comfort Mary and Martha and to mourn over Lazarus' death.

As Jesus approached, Martha heard that He was coming and ran out to meet Him. And that is where we pick up the story in vs.21 of John 11.

(READ vss.21-26.)“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Today, as we consider Jesus' statement to Martha, our curiosity about death and the life after we'll be satisfied. First, let us notice that Jesus' statement brings the resurrection:

1. FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE LIGHT

Many Bible scholars have contended that the Old Testament teaches the doctrine of the resurrection quite vaguely. That it's not so clear with regards to the future life at all. In fact, many Jews at the time of Christ believed it only superficially, if at all. They seemed more concerned with the problems of their current situation, especially their subjugation to Rome, from which they were seeking deliverance.

The truth is, one of the main Jewish parties, the Sadducees, denied any future resurrection altogether and, of course, they did all they could to try to stop the preaching of Christ's resurrection. The Sadducees were not atheists, but downplayed any ideas of a future life, the reason being that the Torah, or the first five books of the Bible, had only the vaguest references to it, and they regarded these five books of Moses as the most authoritative of all. The Pharisees, on the other hand, did believe in a future resurrection

But, if you study the Old Testament closely, it makes reference to the resurrection. Like Lazarus and two others in the New Testament, 3 persons were also raised from the dead in the Old Testament. For example, in 1 Kings 17 we read that Elijah raised the widow of Zarephath's son from the

dead by calling out to the Lord and then stretching himself across the boy 3 times. In 2 Kings 4 we read that Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son by laying on him until his body grew warm, and then lay on him again. The boy sneezed 7 times and opened his eyes--he was alive. In 2 Kings 13:21 we read of a man whose dead body was thrown into Elisha's tomb--when the body touched Elisha's bones it came to life and stood on its feet. Those are the only recorded accounts of resurrection taking place in the O.T.

A few writers in the O.T. also make reference to a future resurrection. For example, Job writes , (19:25-27) *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

Then, David writes in Psa 16:9-11 *"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

Also, Isaiah writes (25:8) we read *"he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces..."*

Again Isaiah says (26:19) *"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."*

There are a couple other verses we could look at that refer to resurrection, but these serve as examples of the O.T. teaching on the subject. However, if you will study these verses in light of the whole O.T. revelation you will see that they are not very clear or complete--that is, the teaching of resurrection has always been there, but it has been somewhat in the shadows.

Jesus brought the truth of the resurrection to the light. Jesus told Martha, "Your brother will rise again." Martha was aware of a coming resurrection for she said in v.24. *"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

But Jesus told her, **"I am the resurrection and the life."** By His teaching, His miracles, and His own resurrection, Jesus clearly taught the resurrection of the human body. He has declared once and for all that death is real, that there is life after death, and that the body will one day be raised by the power of God.

The New Testament teaches us that resurrected believers will be like the risen Christ. 1 Cor 15:49 *"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."*

Phil 3:21 "who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

1 John 3:2 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Jesus brought from the shadows the truth that we who are in Christ will receive a body like His resurrection body.

What kind of body was Jesus' resurrection body? It was a body of flesh and bones. It was a body that retained the wounds of crucifixion. It was a body capable of eating fish around the fire with His companions. But what made it different--and what will be different about our bodies--is that they will never die.

The resurrection accounts of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament were limited in that these people eventually died again. But the resurrection body we will receive will be like our Lord's in that it will never die. Jesus brought the resurrection from the shadows to the light.

Jesus' statement also brings the resurrection:

2. FROM THE BOOK TO A PERSON

Through the years I have grown to love the Bible more and more. I am constantly amazed at the wonderful things God has chosen to reveal to us. Every time I read it I find something I didn't notice before.

I stand in awe of a book compiled of 66 books, written over a time span of 1500 years, in 3 different languages, by 40 different authors from varying backgrounds, on 3 different continents--and yet it has complete agreement on every subject and doctrine it teaches.

I have no trouble believing that a book such as this has the divine imprint of God on it--and for that I am grateful. But you know what, this Book is nothing if it wasn't made personal to us by its author.

When I was in my teens, I attended Bible studies. I was out maybe two or three times a week. My father knew about it and so I thought everything was fine. Especially, I always see him reading the Bible and so I told myself that he must be glad with what I was involved in. One night, when I arrived home my dad was waiting for me. He scolded me for being out most of the time. Then, I reasoned that I thought it was fine with him because he read the Bible. And he said, "I read it not because I believe what it says. I read it just like any other book. Nothing else." That surprised me. I then realized that the Bible can mean something different to somebody else. Just like in some colleges and universities where the Bible is taught and read not as the Word of God but just like any other religious literature. Perhaps, for its historical value, not its spiritual value. But I'm glad to say that years later my dad met

the Savior through the pages of the Bible. God says in Isaiah 55:11, *“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”* The Word of God has been made personal to him through his personal experience with Jesus.

Martha, Lazarus' sister had the same experience. In the Gospels it is clear that Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus were very good friends with Jesus. He had spent much time in their home, having a deep fellowship with them. And now a tragedy had struck-- Lazarus was dead.

Martha knew from the Old Testament that one day Lazarus would rise again. We can say that this was just head knowledge for her. But when Jesus told her "I am the resurrection and the life", He took this doctrine out of the Book and transformed it into a person. He made the words of the Scriptures come alive because He is the living Word. And suddenly, this head knowledge was transformed into heart knowledge.

When you are sick, you want a doctor and not a medical book. When you are being sued you want a lawyer and not a law book. Likewise, when you face the last enemy, death, you want a Savior, not just a doctrine written in a book.

In Jesus Christ every doctrine taught in the book becomes personal. When you belong to Jesus the Bible goes beyond interesting stories and commands to follow.

It comes to life because you have come into a personal relationship with the one who describes Himself as "Resurrection." When you belong to Jesus you have all that you will ever need in life, death, time, or eternity. While we thank God for what the Bible teaches, we realize that we are saved by the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and not by a doctrine written in a book. We believe every word in the Book is true, but our faith is not in a book as much as it is in the person of Christ. Jesus brings the resurrection from the book to a person.

Lastly, we need to realize that the greatest transformation Jesus performed was to move the doctrine of the resurrection:

3. FROM THE FUTURE TO THE PRESENT

We notice that, on one hand, Martha was looking to the future--knowing that one day her beloved brother Lazarus would rise again. Many Christians look forward to the future, to the day they will be fully united with the Savior. And this is, of course, a good thing.

On the other hand, Martha's friends were looking to the past. In v.37 we learn that they were wondering why Jesus hadn't prevented Lazarus from

dying. Many of us find ourselves looking to the past. Some remember better days gone by and they long to experience them again. Others look to their past and wish for some way to erase the mistakes they have made in life.

Now, although there is some benefit to examining our past, and some benefit to looking toward the future--we find that Jesus is trying to center our attention on the present.

He says in v.25, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."* Jesus was talking about the here and now.

He was saying that we don't have to wait till the end to experience resurrection--it is available to us now. Those who place their faith in Christ will never experience death but will live forever in the power of the resurrection. And so, the resurrection is naturally tightly connected to eternal life. What this means is that eternal life begins at the point when you believe in Jesus Christ. Resurrection is the bridge that connects your earthly life to your heavenly life.

The New Testament is filled with this teaching:

Rom 6:4 *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

Gal 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

What does this mean to us? It means that we can live a life of victory. The resurrection power of Jesus will enable us to see things in the proper perspective, that all our troubles at present are temporary. We can overcome them because as Romans 8:37 says, *"we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."*

Jesus is concerned with where we are right now. Are we living a life dependent on Him? Are we experiencing the excitement of resurrection power? Are we daily expressing that power in our circumstances? Remember, as Paul says, *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

We need to look to the future and sometimes we need to examine the past-- but what is most important is the present. Consider where you are right now in your relationship with Jesus Christ:

Is He real to you? Can you reach out and touch Him? Is He making a difference in your life and the lives of those around you?

He can--if you'll only believe.

If you will read on in our text you will discover that Jesus indeed raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus stood before his tomb loudly commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" And in v.44 we read, *"The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face."*

No doubt there was great rejoicing that day in the town of Bethany. There can also be great rejoicing in this church and in your hearts today. Rejoicing because Jesus has brought the resurrection from:

- The Shadows into the Light.
- The Book to a Person.
- The Future to the Present.

Let us pray.....