

### The Person of Resurrection (17-27)

v. 17. Resurrection not resuscitation cf. v. 11

vv. 18-19 many Jews had come to comfort the family

v. 20. Martha doesn't hesitate (as usual) and goes out to meet Jesus before He arrives. “Bible urges (1 Peter 5:7). This includes our burdens and our griefs, our questions and our frustrations. The Psalms are filled with such expressions, and many a faithful prophet cried out, “How long, O Lord, how long!” God's willingness to receive the grieving complaints of our hearts is proved by Jesus' tender ministry to Martha on the road into Bethany.”<sup>1</sup>

v. 21. Complaint or Confession? V. 22 reveals an acknowledgment of Jesus authority over sickness.

v. 23. Words of affirmation albeit pointing to a seemingly distant future.

v. 24. Affirmation of faith (see Dan. 12:2) See also Isa. 65-66 re: New heavens and earth. “Martha believes this, but her rather flat response in verse 24 shows that it isn't at the moment very comforting. But she isn't prepared for Jesus' response. The future has burst into the present. The new creation, and with it the resurrection, has come forward from the end of time into the middle of time. Jesus has not just come, as we sometimes say or sing, ‘from heaven to earth’; it is equally true to say that he has come from God's future into the present, into the mess and muddle of the world we know. ‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ he says. ‘Resurrection’ isn't just a doctrine. It isn't just a future fact. It's a *person*, and here he is standing in front of Martha, teasing her to make the huge jump of trust and hope. He is challenging her, urging her, to exchange her ‘if only ...’ for an ‘if Jesus ...’.

If Jesus is who she is coming to believe he is ...

If Jesus is the **Messiah**, the one who was promised by the prophets, the one who was to come into the world ...

If he is God's own son, the one in whom the living God is strangely and newly present ...

If he is resurrection-in-person, life-come-to-life ...”<sup>2</sup>

v. 25. A profound proclamation! Carson: “Jesus' concern is to divert Martha's focus from an abstract belief in what takes place on the last day, to a personalized belief in him who alone can provide it. Just as he not only gives the bread from heaven (6:27) but is himself the bread of life (6:35), so also he not only raises the dead on the last day (5:21, 25ff.) but is himself the resurrection and the life. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus would show that Martha's faith in His healing ability was well placed **and** He would show her that His was also a resurrection ability. And He not only has power over disease and even death – by reversing such in Lazarus' case – but that He would actually defeat death by dying and then punching a hole out the other end of it! Unlike Lazarus' resurrection, Jesus' was one that didn't reverse death (to live and die again) but to come out the other side with an immortal / spiritual / physical / glorified body! Eternal life begins the moment you meet (receive) Jesus because He is the resurrection and eternal life i.e. the resurrection: though you may die you shall live & the life: you will never die i.e. live forevermore.

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 26). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (p. 7). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 412). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

“Most Marvelous Miracle!” (Jn. 11:17-44)

v. 26. Carson put it this way: “eternal life begins in the person of the resurrection. Knowing Jesus is having eternal life because He is eternal life and the author and person of resurrection. (8:51; cf. 3:15, 16; 5:24). Ordinary, mortal life ebbs away; the life that Jesus gives never ends. It is in that sense that whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die”<sup>4</sup>

v. 27. A wonderful confession. With childlike trust, Martha makes a threefold confession of Jesus viz. she agrees He has power over death, He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the promised one. R. C. Sproul said that he knew of no other greater confession than that of Martha’s here.

**The Premise for Resurrection (ravages of sin and death) (28-37)**

v. 28 Mary’s encounter: “Jesus appealed to Martha’s faith by asking whether she believed. But he appealed to Mary’s faith by waiting outside the town and calling her to come. Jesus always seeks to exercise and strengthen our faith, especially in times of trial and loss.”<sup>5</sup> The sisters’ words were the same but their approaches varied. Martha went out to Jesus while Mary was called by Him. Martha’s faith was affirmed by Jesus’ word and Mary’s grief was matched by Jesus tears.

Perhaps there is illustration here for growth. Martha has a less emotional faith and trust in Jesus’ words was enough consolation but she is known for her complaining about doing much work while Mary sat at Jesus’ feet (all three times Mary is mentioned she stoops to Jesus’ feet). Martha can be commended but a more relational heart developed by prayer could balance the head knowledge with heart impetus (motivation). Mary can be commended for always expressing that heartfelt devotion to Jesus but such must be tempered with the trust and understanding of the instructive Word.

V. 33 “When Jesus saw all this, ‘he was outraged in spirit, and troubled’ (my transl.)”<sup>6</sup>

There is no sense of triumphalism, of someone coming in smugly with the secret formula that will show how clever he is. There is, rather, the man of sorrows, acquainted with our grief and pain, sharing and bearing it to the point of tears.

If sin, illness and death, all devastating features of this fallen world, excite his wrath, it is hard to see how unbelief is excluded. But the world that is at enmity with God is also the object of God’s love (cf. notes on 3:16), so it is not surprising that when he was shown the tomb where the body lay, *Jesus wept*.<sup>7</sup>

“The same sin and death, the same unbelief, that prompted his outrage, also generated his grief. Those who follow Jesus as his disciples today do well to learn the same tension—that grief and compassion without outrage reduce to mere sentiment, while outrage without grief hardens into self-righteous arrogance and irascibility.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 413). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 38). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 415). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>7</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 416). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>8</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 416). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

## “Most Marvelous Miracle!” (Jn. 11:17-44)

Therefore, unlike Mary and Martha’s dispositional bents which call for balance, Jesus demonstrated a perfect balance of grace and truth (see Jn. 1:14). He explained the truth of His person and power to Martha and although outraged, He empathically grieved with Mary.

Therefore, Jesus’ tears were not those of despair but compassion.

vv. 33-35. Let’s not forget that the emotion of indignation occurred before grief. Jesus cleansed the Temple with righteous indignation (Jn. 2:13-16). He condemned the religious Right with a discourse at the Temple (Mat. 23:1-36) before a sorrowful proclamation (Mat. 23:37-39). He warned about hell (e.g. Mat. 5:22, 27-30) and all from a compassionate heart. But then He also grieved, as He does here in v. 35. He was a man of sorrows stricken with grief (Isa. 53:3) for the existence and ravaging / fatal effects of sin and He would have to endure more than any other and, in fact – endure the accumulative payment for the sin of all mankind. Hence, N. T. Wright wrote, “What grief within Jesus’ own heart was stirred by the tears of Mary and the crowd? We can only guess. But among those guesses we must place, not a grief for other deaths in the past, but a grief for a death still to come: his own. This passage points us forward to the questions that will be asked at Jesus’ own death. Couldn’t the man who did so many signs have brought it about that he himself didn’t have to die? Couldn’t the one who saved so many have in the end saved himself?”<sup>9</sup>

### The Proof of Resurrection (38-44)

Righteous Indignation: “We often see Jesus depicted in artwork as almost passive and aloof. But as Jesus approaches the grave of his friend to wage warfare against death, he comes with a passionate zeal. No warrior ever waded into his enemy’s ranks with greater ferocity than Jesus did in warring with death. When Jesus looks on death, he sees the wreckage caused by sin and he sees the fingerprints of his hated enemy, the devil. Benjamin B. Warfield notes:

Jesus approached the grave of Lazarus in a state, not of uncontrollable grief but of inexpressible anger.... The emotion which tore his breast and clamoured for utterance was just rage.... It is death that is the object of his wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death, and whom he had come into the world to destroy. Tears of sympathy may fill his eyes, but ... his soul is held by rage, and he advances to the tomb, in Calvin’s words, ‘as a champion who prepares for conflict.’”<sup>3 10</sup>

Once at the tomb, Jesus was “deeply moved again” (John 11:38). This shows that he enters into our sorrow and feels the pain of our suffering. Yet like a warrior come to the battle, Jesus immediately acts: “Take away the stone,” he says (11:39). With these words, his tension is released into action. Herman

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<sup>9</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (p. 11). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 115–16.

<sup>10</sup> Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (1st ed., Vol. 2, pp. 45–46). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

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Ridderbos writes: “Enough now of tears and wailing! Enough honor has been bestowed on death! Against the power of death God’s glory will now enter the arena!”<sup>11</sup>

v. 39 they fail to anticipate a miracle but Jesus reminds (Martha and disciples (cf. 4, 11-15)) that He told them God would be glorified in this event. Then he demonstrates faith →

v. 41 gives thanks publically for His private prayer’s answer. And again confirms His delay in arrival as an opportunity for faith in Him (His person and power) (v. 42).

Then He shouted out, commanding Lazarus to come forth. It is noted that the specificity of Lazarus identification was necessary in the shout as Jesus’ voice is the voice of resurrection for all people – as we’ll consider momentarily.

vv. 38-44 “And the dead man comes out—a heart-stopping moment of shuddering horror and overwhelming joy, mixed together like dark mud and liquid gold. All this is hugely important. If we don’t feel its power, and find ourselves driven to awe and thanks and hope, then either we haven’t learned to read or we have hearts of stone.”<sup>12</sup>

Could they have expected such? Certainly it was a sight that aroused inexpressible emotions. We’ve seen Jesus turn water to wine, heal a man’s son from a far distance, make a paralyzed man walk, feed five thousand with a single snack, and make a man born blind to see! And what else is left than to defeat death itself? To overcome the ultimate effect of sin and evil was the reason Jesus came. And though this is a sign over the other signs – His own resurrection would prove to be the ultimate sign / proof that He indeed had conquered Satan, sin, evil, death, and hell – by atoning for our sin and reconciling us to God!

It was only the ‘voice’ of the One who spoke and the universe leapt into existence (Ps. 33:6, 9) who had the authority to shout out to Lazarus to come forth from the dead (Jn. 11:43). His is the same voice which calls us out of spiritual death into eternal life (Jn. 5:24; 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 15:17-19; Eph. 2:5-6; 5:14). This voice will shout again as a trumpet blast when He call all the dead from their graves to the physical and final resurrection (Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16). And such is the same voice shared by the Bride who invites all to come and freely take of the life-giving water of Christ (Rev. 22:17 cf. Isa. 55:1 & Jn. 7:37).

That’s some voice – and that’s some demonstration!

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<sup>11</sup> Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 53). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (pp. 13–14). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.