

§186b. Jesus Resurrects Lazarus - Part B

(John 11:17-27)

Introduction

1. In spite of Jesus love for Lazarus, he delayed his visit for the glory of God. That is agape love: looking for the ultimate good.
2. A lesson to the disciples that they can neither extend their life by protection while disobeying God or curtail by taking risk for the Lord in His will.
3. John is more concerned about the conversation between Jesus and Martha and the spiritual significance of raising Lazarus from the dead.

Exposition

11:17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

1. **Jesus came:** As seen in the previous verses, Jesus deliberately delayed his departure to Bethany. The Lord was aiming at the glory of God in spite of his love for the family.
2. **Four days:** Jewish belief based on rabbinical commentary of the old testament that the soul does not depart the dead person for three days. After that the death is irreversible. This belief seems to be attested by v. 39.

11:18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.

1. **Bethany:** This place is very close to Jerusalem, the religious capital of the Jews.
2. **Two miles:** This explains why there are many Jews visited this family.

11:19 And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

1. **Many of the Jews:** The context suggests that these are the Jews who came from Jerusalem and are belong to the religious elite.
2. **Comfort them:** The family of Lazarus might have been reasonably influential and may be relatively rich. Remember the costly perfume Mary used to anoint Jesus (John 12).

11:20 Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

1. **Martha:** She is very active and a woman who takes initiative unlike her sister Mary.
2. **Went and met Him:** Martha was very hospitable as evident from Luke 10:38-42. Hence, even without the invitation of Jesus, she went and met Jesus.
3. **Mary:** She was quite at the same time spiritually inclined as evident from Luke 10 and John 12.

11:21 Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

1. **If You had been here:** This is not a rebuke or complain to Jesus. It show how much she loved her brother. Similar wishful thinking we all have when a loved on died.
2. **would not have died:** At the same time she also had the faith in Jesus that had he been here, he would have healed Lazarus from his ailment.

11:22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

1. **Even now:** This statement is puzzling. Did she really believed that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead. It is unlikely as evident from her subsequent conversation with Jesus especially v 24 and v 39.
2. **I know:** True faith is a personal conviction.

3. **What ever:** Martha was not specific in Jesus ability to raise someone from the dead. Instead, she believed that God is able to hear the prayer of Jesus.

11:23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

1. **Your brother will rise again:** It has given enough ambiguity. From Martha’s perspective, this statement could have been typical empty words people say to comfort the grieved one. Now we know that what Jesus said was not the final resurrection about the miracle that he is going to perform.

11:24 Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

1. **I know that:** She says Jesus words are not really a comfort since she knew of end time resurrection. Hardly she realized that Jesus was referring to an immediate resurrection.
2. **Resurrection at the last day:** Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and taught them.

Mark 12:18. Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying:

Acts 23:8. For Sadducee’s say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.

11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

1. The seven references to the I am statements of John’s gospel includes:
 - (a) I am the bread of life (6:35),
 - (b) I am the light of the world (8:12),
 - (c) I am the gate (10:7, 9),
 - (d) I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14),
 - (e) I am the resurrection and the life (11:25),

- (f) I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6),
- (g) I am the true vine (15:1, 5).

2. **I am (egō eimi):** A careful study of this phrase points more to the words of Isaiah than to Moses. Among the

Isa. 41:4. . . . 'I, the Lord, am the first; And with the last I am He.' "

Isa. 43:10. "You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me

Isa. 48:12. "Listen to Me, O . . . Israel . . . : I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last

Exo. 3:14. And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

For others to apply this title (I AM) to themselves was blasphemous and will face the wrath of God

Isa. 47:8. "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me . . .

Zep. 2:15. This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, "I am it, and there is none besides me." How has she become a desolation

Undoubtedly, all these points to the deity of Christ. At the same time, Lord is careful in maintaining the distinction between the Father and Son.

3. **Resurrection and life:** Jesus did not say that he will give resurrection and life; but He is the resurrection and life. This is the whole point of difference between the Pharisaical belief of resurrection and what the Lord is teaching. Pharisees believed in an abstract concept of resurrection while Jesus pointed out the resurrection that he spoke is intrinsically tied to the person of Christ. There is neither resurrection nor eternal life outside of him

4. **Resurrection and life:** Resurrection and life are two complementary things. Resurrection leads to an experience of eternal life.
5. **He who believes in me:** Means of obtaining this resurrection by faith in the person of Christ. He is the one who gives eternal life.
6. **Though he may die, he shall live:** Seems to a contradictory statement to the skeptic. The former means the inevitable physical death of even those who believe in Jesus. The latter means the eternal life to those who believe in Christ.

11:26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

1. **Whoever Lives and Believes:** This word order seems illogical. This means that whoever has eternal life and believes in Jesus will never die. The first stresses the internal change that must come about by the power of God (viz. he lives, he has eternal life); the second underlines what stance the individual must adopt (viz. he believes).
2. **Shall never die:** This should not be understood that there is no absolute death. In anticipation of Jesus' resurrection and the pouring out of the Spirit, there is the repeated promise that those who believe in him will immediately possess eternal life. This eternal life is not a future prospect but a present reality.

John 5:24. "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

John 8:51. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

However, this does not mean that there is no future resurrection. That would be a heresy.

2 Tim. 2:17-18. ... Hymenaeus and Philetus ... have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some

3. **Do you believe this?** Jesus was not asking if Martha believes that Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the tomb. Instead, more than raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus was asking if she believes the basis of resurrection at the end is due to the personal faith in Jesus as the life giver. If so, then, raising Lazarus is parabolic, in the sense that raising Lazarus from the dead is an demonstration of the proof that faith in life-giving power of Christ that will result into eternal life.

11:27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

1. **Yes Lord:** We don't know how much she understood the words of Jesus at that point of time. Nevertheless, she confesses more than what Jesus said. Her confession comprises of three theological truths about the Jesus.
2. **I believe:** Her personal faith and conviction in what Jesus said, and take it beyond what Jesus said just now of the resurrection and eternal life. She now acknowledges who the person of Jesus is.
3. **Christ:** Jesus is the promised Messiah of the OT especially that of Isaiah. The word means the anointed one. Just like Aaron was anointed as the high priest (**Exo. 29:7.**), David as the king (**1 Sam. 16:13.**), and Elisha as the prophet (**1 Kings 19:16.**); Jesus is anointed as the High Priest, the King, and the Prophet, but the one above all.
4. **Son of God:** One who is equal with God in authority; but is distinct from the Father. Just like son share the likeness of his father, Jesus share the likeness of His Father. Therefore, it shows the unique relation and intimacy Jesus has with God the Father. Certainly Jesus is the true Israel.

Exo. 4:22. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

5. **One who was to come to the world:** This is pointing the incarnation of God who was sent to this world from heaven.

John 6:14. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Deu. 18:15-19. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me [Moses] . . . Him you shall hear . . . 18 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him

One can see Martha's understanding of who Christ is.

Application

1. Faith is more than an abstract belief - but it involves a personal relation with Christ
2. Faith is more than what Christ is able to do - but it involves knowing the person of Christ
3. Faith is more than a past experience - but it involves a growing understanding of Christ