

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "I Am the Resurrection and the Life!"

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. In spite of all the quantum leaps we've made in modern technology, one thing remains unchanged – death.
  - A. Even though technology may prolong our lives, it doesn't keep us from eventually experiencing this grim reality.
    1. In his book, *The Last Thing We Talk About*, Joseph Bayly describes this paradox in these words:
      - a. *"This frustrates us, especially in a time of scientific breakthrough and exploding knowledge, that we should be able to break out of earth's environment and yet be stopped cold by death's unyielding mystery. . . . We may postpone it, we may tame its violence, but death is still there waiting for us. . . . Death always waits. . . . Death spares none."*
    2. In the Old Testament, Solomon repeatedly reminds us in Ecclesiastes that death is the great equalizer.

- a. **Ecclesiastes 2:14-15** – *The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that the same event happens to them all. 15 So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me, and why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity."*
  - b. **Ecclesiastes 7:2** – *Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart.*
  - c. **Ecclesiastes 9:2-3** – *All things come alike to all: one event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath, as he who fears an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*
3. No matter who we are, no matter how much money we have, no matter how much power and influence we exert, death is the one event that is inescapable – it happens to all.

4. In fact, the Hebrew writer put it this way: **Hebrews 9:27** – *"... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..."*
  5. Even the Patriarch Job understood that no one returns from death: **Job 16:22** – *"For when a few years are finished, I shall go the way of no return."*
- B. The Scriptures are crystal clear – death occurs to all.
1. It is that one event that happens *"to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice"* (**Ecclesiastes 9:2**)
  2. We die once and after death we will be judged by God, because it is *"the way of no return."* (**Job 16:22**)
- C. However, there have been some notable exceptions to this rule.
1. There are two men in the Old Testament who did not experience death:
    - a. **Hebrews 11:5** – *By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"* (Quoting from Genesis 5:24)
    - b. **2 Kings 2:1** – *And it came to pass, when the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.*
  2. There are also examples in both the Old and New Testament of certain individuals being resurrected from the dead.

- a. Elijah raised the widow's son (**1 Kings 17:17-24**)
  - b. Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman (**2 Kings 4:32-37**)
  - c. Then there is the miraculous resurrection of the young man who was hastily buried in Elisha's tomb (**2 Kings 12:20-21**)
  - d. While in Galilee, Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain (**Luke 7:11-17**)
  - e. Also in Galilee, Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue (**Matthew 9:18-26**)
3. But there is one more resurrection Jesus performed – only this time it would be done in Judea, in a little village called Bethany, just 2 miles from Jerusalem.
- a. This resurrection would not only send a shockwave through the city of Jerusalem, it would seal the fate of Jesus in the minds of His enemies.
  - b. It's the resurrection of a friend of Jesus by the name of Lazarus – the brother of Mary and Martha. (**John 11**)
- D. Curiously, this story is only recorded in the gospel of John.
- 1. But that shouldn't concern us. There are other miracles of Jesus that are only recorded in John's gospel.
    - a. Turning water into wine (John 2), healing of the nobleman's son (John 4), healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda

(John 5), and healing of the man born blind (John 9) are only recorded in the gospel of John.

2. But, when we remember that the whole purpose of John's gospel is to prove the deity of Jesus Christ, perhaps we can understand why the miracle of raising of Lazarus from the dead is given such prominence here.
- II. Therefore, as we continue in our studies through John's gospel in the series "Exalting Jesus Christ" we come to the eleventh chapter.
- A. It is here that Jesus makes another bold claim to deity.
    1. Jesus will courageously and unashamedly say: "I Am the Resurrection and the Life."
    2. Only God had the power to resurrect the dead and restore them to life again.
      - a. Rest assured that all the so-called claims of people in our day coming back from the dead – being declared clinically dead, and then be resuscitated – are not examples of resurrection.
      - b. Medical science defines death when there are no visible signs of life – no breathing, voluntary or involuntary movement, and no brainwave activity.
      - c. But God defines death as the moment the soul finally leaves the body and returns to Him. And once that happens, no

medical team on the face of God's earth can bring that person back to life again.

3. Therefore, when Jesus said, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" He not only claimed to have the power to raise the dead, He claimed to be the source of the power of resurrection and of life after death.
- B. As we've done in the past, we want to consider three things as we look at this amazing event.
1. First, we want to understand the setting in which this miracle took place.
  2. Then we want look closely at the miracle itself, and the purpose for this miracle.
  3. And finally, we want to consider the diverse reactions of those who either witnessed or who learned of this wonderful miracle.

**BODY:**

- I. The setting of this amazing miracle takes place in the small village of Bethany on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives – a 40 minute casual stroll from Jerusalem
- A. The name Bethany means "house of dates" because of the numerous date palms that were common in and around the small village.

1. Jesus often stayed in Bethany with friends, including Simon the Leper (Matthew 26:6-13), and the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha (John 11:1).
2. But as the curtain opens on John chapter eleven, Jesus is not in Bethany.
  - a. If you recall, Jesus had left Jerusalem and went across the Jordan to the place where John had once baptized (John 10:40).
  - b. It was the place called Bethabara (John 1:28) – about 30 miles from Bethany, or a two-day journey.
3. When word reached Jesus that his dear friend Lazarus was ill and not expected to live, the Lord wanted to return to Judea.
  - a. But His disciples urged Him not to return, since it hadn't been all that long ago that the religious leaders in Jerusalem wanted to stone Jesus for claiming to be One with God the Father.
4. However, Lazarus was already dead.
  - a. Therefore, Jesus said: **John 11:11** – *"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."*
  - b. When it was clear that the Lord's disciples didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, the Lord plainly said: **John 11:14-15** – *"Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes*

*that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."*

5. Convinced that Jesus would be put to death upon returning to Jerusalem, Thomas tried to instill courage in the others by saying:  
**John 11:16** – *"Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

II. Now, let's turn our attention to the miracle itself, and see why Jesus chose to demonstrate His divine power in such a dramatic way.

- A. Four days after the death of Lazarus, Jesus and His disciples approached Bethany right in the middle of the traditional week-long period of mourning known as a Shiva.
  1. Mary and Martha are surrounded by friends who had come to also mourn the loss of their brother Lazarus.
  2. Upon hearing that Jesus was just outside of the village, Martha went to meet the Lord, and said: **John 11:21-22** – *"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."*
    - a. **John 11:23** – *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*
    - b. **John 11:24** – *Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*
  3. It is here that Jesus makes another bold claim to deity.



- a. **John 11:25-27** – *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 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."*
4. When we look more closely at this short exchange between the Lord and Martha, it becomes clear that she knows that Jesus is the Son of God and has the power to do whatever He chooses to do.
5. But Martha didn't always have this depth of faith.
  - a. Perhaps you remember a previous occasion when Jesus spent some time in the home of Mary and Martha.
  - b. On that occasion it was Mary who took an interest in the Lord's teaching, while Martha was busy taking care of her guest and His disciples ( Luke 10:38-42).
6. But now, Martha has complete faith in the Lord's power.
- B. When Martha went back to tell Mary about the Lord's arrival, Mary immediately goes to find Jesus, followed by the women who had been mourning with Mary and Martha.
  1. **John 11:32-34** – *Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when*

*Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."*

2. Then, we come to the shortest verse in the New Testament: **John 11:35** – *Jesus wept.*
  - a. We're not told why Jesus wept.
  - b. Some thought the Lord grieved over the loss of His dear friend: **John 11:36** – *Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"*
  - c. However, it seems that Jesus wept because there were those who had seen all His miracles, and still didn't believe in Him.
  - d. Perhaps that's why John tells us: **John 11:37** – *And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"*
- C. Still groaning over the unbelief of the Jews, Jesus arrived at the tomb and ordered that the stone covering the entrance be removed.
  1. Immediately, Martha intervenes: **John 11:39** – *Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."*
    - a. Whether she said this because she lacked faith that Jesus could raise the dead, or to simply remind Jesus that the body of Lazarus had already begun to decay – we don't know.

- b. But we do know that this one fact would clearly erase any doubts in the minds of skeptics that Jesus was about to fake a resurrection of a man who really wasn't dead.
  - c. Lazarus had been dead for four days. His body had already begun to decompose, and the odor of decay would fill the air as soon as the stone was removed.
  - d. This is no fake resurrection. This is the real thing.
2. Therefore: **John 11:40-41** – *Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.*
- D. Jesus then turned to the Father in prayer.
- 1. **John 11:41-42** – *And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."*
  - 2. In this very brief prayer Jesus thanks God for the unbreakable, never-ending fellowship and union between Him and the Father.
    - a. There was never any doubt in the mind of Jesus that His prayers were always heard – He and the Father are One.

- b. Instead, Jesus said this for the benefit of those who heard His petition to the Father – to let them know that the prayers of Jesus are always heard by the Father.
  - c. This was done so that *"they may believe that You sent Me,"* Jesus said – which would erase any doubts in the minds of those who sincerely sought after Jesus that He was truly the Son of God.
  - d. If those present had not heard Jesus thank the Father on this occasion, it's quite possible they would have given Jesus credit for raising Lazarus from the dead, rather than glorify God the Father.
  - e. Everything Jesus did – in all the miracles He performed – were not simply designed to prove His deity, but also to glorify God the Father.
  - f. And even now, Jesus wanted those present to know that this miracle was being done by Him with the approval and power of God the Father.
- E. The moment finally came for Jesus to perform the greatest miracle of all in the presence of everyone present.
1. **John 11:43** – *Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"*

- a. I can only imagine that every eye turned to the darkened tomb, straining to see any signs of life emerge from the shadows.
2. Do you remember back in the fifth chapter of John when the Jewish religious leaders were prepared to kill Jesus for healing a lame man on the Sabbath?
    - a. Jesus said He had come to do the Father's will – not His own – implying that healing this man on the Sabbath who had been unable to walk for 38 years was the Father's will.
    - b. And then, Jesus shocked these pious hypocrites by saying:  
**John 5:25-29** – *Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

3. Jesus said a time was coming when *"all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth"* – every person, throughout all time, who has died will come forth from their graves.
  - a. Obviously, this is a reference to the resurrection of the dead at the end of time.
  - b. Years later, near the end of his life, the apostle John wrote about this event which he saw in a vision. It's recorded in the book we know as Revelation.
  - c. **Revelation 20:11-15** – *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

4. That's when *"all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth."*
  - a. But on this occasion the only one to hear the voice of the Lord was Lazarus – whom the Lord called by name.
  - b. *"Lazarus, come forth!"*
- F. Finally, emerging from the shadows of the tomb a form began to appear.
  1. **John 11:44** – *And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."*
- III. So, what was the reaction of those who saw this amazing miracle, or who learned about it by hearing the news from others?
  - A. As with all the miracles Jesus performed, the reaction was diverse.
    1. **John 11:45-48** – *Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."*

- B. Many obviously believed in Jesus. But the chief priests and Pharisees, along with the High Priest Caiaphas, gathered the council – probably the Sanhedrin – to consider their options.
1. There was no way they could deny the miracle – Lazarus was living, breathing proof that Jesus was the Son of God.
  2. But rather than accept the fact that Jesus truly was the Messiah, they began worrying about their own futures.
    - a. It was a common mistaken belief among the Jews of that day, and a mistaken belief by many today, that when the Messiah came, He would raise up an army and conquer the enemies of the Lord and restore Israel back to its prominence as in the days of Saul, David and Solomon.
    - b. There was also a common belief held by the Jews of Jesus' day that when the Messiah came, He would also purge Jerusalem and all Israel of its corrupt religious leaders, starting with the High Priest.
    - c. These religious leaders feared that Jesus would be that kind of a Messiah.
    - d. They not only feared that Jesus would anger the Romans in raising up an army of independence, but that these religious leaders would be exposed for the corrupt men they were and lose their positions of power and influence.



- e. Therefore, in their corrupt disbelieving minds, Jesus must go – despite the fact that He had all the credentials of being the very Son of God – as He claimed.
- C. Therefore, Caiaphas, the High Priest, came up with a very simple solution – kill Jesus.
1. **John 11:49-53** – *And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.*
    - a. Rather than upset the Romans who would be forced to put down any uprising, and rather than risk losing their own positions of power and authority, Caiaphas sarcastically proposed *"one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."*
    - b. Rather than allow the wrath of Rome to destroy the nation of Israel, they would plot to bring down the wrath of Rome on Jesus – the man who wants to be King of the Jews.

- c. So, *"from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death."*
2. Little did Caiaphas know that in plotting to put Jesus to death, Caiaphas was actually fulfilling the eternal purpose of God in Jesus becoming the Lamb of God who would die to take away the sins of the world – both Jew and Gentile.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- I. It seems almost inconceivable to us that someone could see all the evidence that clearly proved Jesus is truly the Son of God, and still reject Him – especially to the point where they would actually want to kill Him.
  - A. But these men were only concerned about the here-and-now.
    1. They couldn't see past today; past the love of the world and the things of the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the boastful pride of life.
    2. But when you stop and think about it, the world is filled with people who refuse to see Jesus for who He really is.
    3. And even if they did, they would still reject Him for the same reasons – they can't see past today; past the love of the world and the things of the world.
- II. The claims that Jesus repeatedly made concerning His deity are scattered all throughout the gospel of John.

A. But it is the claim He made in John chapter eleven that should be most important to us.

1. Jesus said: **John 11:25-26** – *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*

B. There are two great truths Jesus revealed here.

1. First, He said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*
  - a. Jesus is the only one who can guarantee that we will be resurrected from the dead and live forever in heaven.
  - b. He is *"the resurrection and the life"* – and even though we will someday die, we shall live again.
  - c. But this grand promise is made only to those who truly believe in Him.
2. And second, Jesus said: *"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."*
  - a. We never have to worry about losing fellowship with God – we never have to worry about dying spiritually and being eternally separated from God – as long as we continue to live in Him and believe in Him.
  - b. We will never have to experience *"the second death"* John talked about in Revelation chapter 20.

- c. But again, this wonderful promise is made only to those who remain faithful to the Lord and who continue to foster an obedient faith in Jesus.

III. Can you claim these two great promises?

A. Do you truly believe in Jesus Christ?

- 1. Have you come to Christ in faith and repentance, confessing Him to be the Christ, and have been baptized into Christ to wash away all your past sins – and then added by the Lord to His church?
- 2. This is the only way you can have the assurance that even though you will die someday, you will live again.

B. And are you continuing to live in Him – is your faith today the same obedient faith you had when you first obeyed the gospel.

- 1. Are you living your life – living every day of your life – to please Him?
  - a. Are you truly living in Him?
  - b. Are you completely free from the worry of losing fellowship with God – free from the worry of being eternally separated from God – because you know you are living in Him and continuing to believe in Him?
- 2. This is the only way you can escape the "second death" of Revelation chapter 20.

C. If you have any doubts about your relationship with Christ, don't be like those who allow the love of this world to blind them to the reality of the next world.

1. We will all spend an eternity in one of two places.
  - a. We will either spend an eternity with God.
  - b. Or we will spend an eternity separated from God.