



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 11:1-27

“The Resurrection and the Life”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re turning to John chapter 11 for our Scripture reading, and we’re going to read the first 27 verses. The subject for this morning is “The Resurrection and the Life,” words that are taken from the great affirmation that the Lord makes to Martha before the restoration of Lazarus to life. John chapter 11 and verse 1,

“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

That’s a rather interesting statement because we should rather have expected the Lord to say, “If a man walk in the night he stumbleth because there is no light around him,” or perhaps even “for him.” But he says, “There s no light in him,” which may indicate that these words have more than a physical sense or a direct narrative since. They may have a metaphorical sense as well.

“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead (or better Lazarus has died). And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus.”

That word means twin. Nothing is said about Thomas’ twin, but evidently he was. This word “Thomas” comes from the Hebrew word which means a twin, *ta'ovm*. So that was his name, twin.

“Thomas said unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. (Now he refers not to Lazarus but to the Lord. They were fearful of course that he would be stoned to death in Judaea.) Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: (Just about two miles) And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.”

It was the custom for individuals who were mourning to sit down and others came to console them, and so Mary evidently stayed in order to be there when friends would come to console them for the loss of Lazarus. “

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

Readers of the Gospel of John recognize immediately that this is a somewhat climatic statement because the whole gospel, so John the Apostle says was written in order that individuals may come to just such a trust in the Lord for he wrote later on, “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” And so when Martha says, “I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God,” she has really reached the goal that John hoped would be reached when individuals read his testimony as found in his book. I’m sure that if John were here he would say, “That is my hope for you, that you too will come to see that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that in believing in him you may have life through his name.”

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] The subject for today is “The Resurrection and the Life,” and we are turning to John chapter 11. The Apostle John has told us, as we mentioned in the Scripture reading, that the reason that he has written his gospel is really propaganda. He has presented us with the story of a number of marvelous signs that Jesus performed, and he had as his aim and goal that these signs should bring us to the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that in believing in

him we might have life through his name. In reading through the Gospel of John you notice that there have been six signs previously set out in the Gospel of John, six miracles. This is the seventh. And if we follow the counting of most, this is the final sign of the gospel. Some have thought that perhaps the miracle performed in the 21st chapter may be called an 8th sign, perhaps. But at least there is general agreement that he has presented seven signs, and then he begins to teach the apostles in the upper room in the light of his absence physically from the earth. So this is then the climatic sign, the seventh, the final one. And it is the restoration of Lazarus from death to life.

What it is designed to teach us of course is that the Messiah truly can give us life, and so in the restoration of Lazarus and his resurrection from the dead he is illustrating the fact that he is able to give eternal life. And the evidence of it is his power to raise from the dead. Someone has said that in this chapter the goal of God is a grave. That is the grave of Lazarus. But it has as its glorious purpose life.

Now let me say one thing about what I will be saying through the chapter right here. From time to time I'll use the term resurrection, from time to time restoration. Strictly speaking the term resurrection is used of the experience of Lazarus here because it was a coming from death to life, and so we normally think of that as a resurrection but from the standpoint of theology, from the standpoint of the precise doctrine of the Scriptures only one person has ever been resurrected to the present day. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus is the first fruits, then those who are his at his coming. So there has been only one person who has been resurrection even to 1983. We look forward to the future and his coming again when those who belong to him shall share in resurrection.

Well, one might say, “Have there not been people who have been restored to life?” Yes there have been people restored to life, of course. In this chapter, we have an instance of it, a person restored to life. But restoration to natural life and then again physical death is not resurrection in the doctrinal sense. To be resurrected is to be dead, brought to life in a glorified body. Now the Lord Jesus is the only person who has been resurrected in that sense. He went into physical death. He

came out with a resurrected, glorified body. He’s the only person to this point who has been resurrection. But using the term loosely of a person who has come from death to life, we may use it of Lazarus, but he strictly speaking has been restored to life, doctrinally. Lazarus evidently lived out his life and then died again.

Well the teaching of this particular sign is epitomized in the “I am” statement, the fifth of the “I am” statements in the book. When Jesus says, according to the 25th verse, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” That is the doctrine that is illustrated in Lazarus’ experience. So, he’s the picture, Lazarus, of the process of someone coming to life in Jesus Christ.

Scholars have had a bit of a problem with John chapter 11. As they read it they find some difficulties, and I have a bit of sympathy with them. When one reads the Synoptic Gospels, those gospels that look at our Lord’s life generally from the same view point. That’s why they’re called synoptic. That is by the same kind of eye. When you read the synoptic gospels you don’t read anything about the resurrection of Lazarus. It’s not found there. It’s only found in the Gospel of John. That wouldn’t be surprising because there are many things found in one gospel that are not found in another gospel.

Many things in the Gospel of John that are not found in the other synoptic gospels, but what makes it difficult is that it seems to be the event that caused the leaders in Jerusalem to plot against our Lord’s life and bring him to the death of Calvary. In other words, it appears to be the galvanizing miracle that sets in operation the events that lead to his death. And surely in the setting forth of the Lord’s ministry, one would think that this miracle therefore would be so important that it would be recorded in all of the gospels. Whereas in the synoptic gospels, the thing that seems to be the galvanizing, or the catalytic miracle or sign is our Lord’s cleansing of the temple which so irritated them as to bring on the events that issue in his death. So I can understand how a scholar reading this might say why since we have no record in the synoptic of this event. It is given such

great importance by John. Is it possible that this is simply an invented symbol. In other words, John wants to set out that the Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life and so he invents the story of Lazarus in order to illustrate the doctrine that he wants to set out.

Now to my mind there is little plausibility in that reading of the Gospel of John, and I'll tell you why. If that were so, since John does not give us any indication that that is what he has done. What we really would have is a gospel writer who is something of an imposter for he is presenting something as happening which really didn't happen, and furthermore he's writing fiction. And yet in this same gospel we have a magnificent presentation of the holy Son of God and also a setting out of ethical principles and a system of truth, Christianity that is absolutely pure, remarkable for its purity and holiness. So what we have really is a moral miracle, a man who could give us such a picture of Christ and at the same time be an imposter and write fiction. It's a bigger miracle almost than the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Furthermore it would be childish to attempt to prove doctrine by a symbol, by an unhistorical symbol. That wouldn't prove doctrine to any thinking person. One might see a reason why it's found in John and it's not found in the Synoptics. Notice the absence of one important person through this section in John. Now we've had mention of the Apostle Peter previously, John chapter 6. We'll have mention of Peter again in John chapter 13, but no reference to the Apostle Peter from John chapter 6 verse 68 to chapter 13 and verse 6. In other words, evidently Peter was absent when these events were taking place.

Now we know the Synoptic Gospels are very much dependent upon the testimony of the Apostle Peter. In fact, Mark's gospel, historically, has been associated with Peter. It in fact has been called his gospel, recorded by Mark, but nevertheless the events and the structure coming ultimate from Peter. And since it is possible that the other synoptic laid a great deal of stress upon what was found in Mark. It's possible Luke knew of it. He said he'd consulted many accounts in the construction of his gospel. It's likely that one of the reasons for this difference is that the first three gospels have a strong influence from the Apostle Peter, but he was absent when these events were

taking place, and so that may account for the fact that in John’s thinking this is the climatic catalytic event that leads to the events of the cross.

Well that’s a very interest thing for a person who teaches in a theological seminary. I’m sure it’s not so interesting to you, but one of these days you might run into someone who says, “I cannot believe the Gospel of John. I cannot believe chapter 11. It’s not found in the other gospels.” And so what we have is really a symbol given by the apostle in order to try to teach a doctrinal truth. Well you know that there is not a great deal of plausibility in support of that kind of construction of this chapter.

Well let’s look now at what the chapter has to say. And first of all John describes the death of Lazarus. There are really four scenes in this chapter. There is the news of the death of Lazarus that comes to our Lord and to the disciples, and then secondly in verse 7 through verse 16, they attempt to dissuade him from going up to Jerusalem. And then in verse 17 through verse 32 the Lord, after going south to Bethany, meets Martha and then meets Mary and has conversations with them. And finally in the remaining verses that have to do with the resurrection or restoration of Lazarus, the miracle or the mighty sign is described. And that concludes with verse 46. And the chapter, as you know, concludes with another section concerning the prophesy of Caiaphas.

The death of Lazarus: Lazarus’ name incidentally means “the one whom God has helped.” It’s the Hebrew word *elazar* or *eleazar*. Not it often was shorted to *elazar* from which we would get Lazarus. The Hebrew verb *azar* means to help. And so *el* has the idea of God. So here is a person whose name is “God has helped.” It’s a very fitting name because that of course is what happened to Lazarus. He was preeminently helped as he was lying dead in the grave.

We read in verse 3, “The sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.” He’s not even named. They expect that our Lord will know the one who is meant when they say, “The one whom Thou lovest is sick.” That would seem to indicate that our Lord was very close to the family in Bethany, to Martha, to Mary and to Lazarus, and the events of the gospels bear that out. In fact Bethany itself was a place where the Lord Jesus always had reception. He didn't have

reception in many other places, but he was always properly received in Bethany, and for that reason, Bethany is a place that meant a great deal to our Lord. He must have spent a good bit of time there, and I can understand then why they would say, “He whom Thou lovest is sick.”

Well when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” Obviously he does not mean that he would not die, but that is not the purpose of the sickness. There is a purpose that goes beyond the sickness and beyond the death and it is that God might be glorified, and that the Son of God might be glorified in the experience.

“Now Jesus loved Martha, (John says) and her sister, and Lazarus.” By the way you’ll notice these words and the order of the names in these verses and one gains the distinct impression that Martha was the older sister of the two. She is the energetic one. She’s the one that when the Lord Jesus visits the home, who goes immediately into the kitchen and begins to prepare a meal for the Lord. Mary is a more contemplative type. Martha is more energetic. Martha takes control of things, and here we read, “Jesus love Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus,” but now the 6th verse is surprising. “When he had heard therefore that he was sick,” we would have expected he quickly traveled south to Judaea, but we read just the opposite, “When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.” Can you not imagine some of the individuals who knew the information about Lazarus’ sickness saying to him, “Don't you really love them? Don't you really have any care for him? Oh, you say you love him but your actions speak otherwise. He is sick and you are staying here and doing nothing about it.”

Some have said the reason the Lord stayed in the place where he was was that he would perform thereby a more spectacular miracle. Well it would be a more spectacular miracle of course, he would heal in one case, but to raise from the dead is something else. This of course is the statement that overthrows almost all charismatic teaching today. They can claim healing because healing is easily counterfeited, but to raise from the dead, that’s another matter. That is only done by the power of God, at God’s appointed time. So the apostles preformed a miracle occasionally. The

Lord Jesus preformed a miracle. Charismatics do not perform a miracle. Now if they would perform a miracle just a few times for me, I'd be happy to join up with them and say, “There is evidence of that gift,” but they've not been able to do it, and I'm still waiting. I'm not holding my breath mind you, but I'm still waiting.

Well it was not in order to perform a more spectacular miracle that the Lord stayed where he was. It was simply not yet the Father's will to go. Even the loved ones of our Lord cannot coerce the Lord Jesus Christ to do the will of God. That is very important. The Lord was absolutely dependent upon the will of the Father. He didn't incidentally draw up a piece of paper and say, “Now Lazarus is sick. What shall I do? I'll draw a line down the paper and I'll write the reasons pro and the reasons con. Pro, I love him. He's sick. He might die. Con, I don't have any indication from God my Father that it's his will to go. Con, I'm doing some work up here. Con, number three, they stoned me the last time I was there. I better look out.” Now you'll notice he does not do this. For him, it is a more personal relationship. He was guided by his heavenly Father who gave him specific instructions throughout his whole life. We never have any indication our Lord reasoned what was right and what was wrong. The Father and he were in such contact that the Father was able to communicate his will to the Son so that he says he said the things the Father told him to say, and he did the things the Father told him to do. So I conclude that the reason he did not go is simply that it was not the Father's will.

Of course as we look at this miracle later, we can see some reasons why the Father's will was that he should stay two days where he was so that since it took one day at least for the information to get north that Lazarus was sick and one day for him to travel back again, that when he arrived Lazarus had been dead four days. Because you see the Jews had some customs regarding the dead which makes this four days rather significant. Burial was usually not delayed in the land of Palestine. Bodies quickly decomposed. If you'll remember Ananias & Sapphira were buried immediately upon their death. Four days in Jewish belief was significant because there is a great deal of tradition to the effect that they believe that the soul remained near the body that was in the grave for three days,

hoping for a chance to return to the body. But since on the fourth day, decomposition begins ordinarily, then the soul seeing that the body was changing its appearance left, in Jewish thought. Let me read you some of the things, this is Rabbi Abba and in some of the Jewish literature in the name of Rabbi Levi this is said, “For three days after death the soul hovers over the body intending to reenter it, but as soon as it sees its appearance change it departs.” Then one other statement in Rabbinic literature, “The full force of mourning lasts for three days. Why? Because for that length of time the shape of the face is recognizable, in line with this, the missioner, a Jewish work, learned by the Apostle Paul and others repetitively provided that evidence of the identity of a corpse may be given only during the three days after death. So when a corpse would be identified one could do that for the three day period, but after that one could not because of the change of appearance of the individual. So it may be that there is some significance in the fact that the Father said to the Son wait two days. By the time he reaches the grave it has been four days and Martha says, when Jesus says, “Take ye away the stone,” she said, “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days,” verse 39.

Well, now the word comes then of Lazarus’ sickness and the Lord Jesus says to the disciples, “Let us go into Judaea again,” verse 7. Now of course they immediately seek to dissuade him. They say, “Look they tried to stone you before and you’re going there again?” Remember in the preceding chapter in verse 31 we read, “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.” So it’s natural that they should say, “They sought to stone you, don’t go.” And the Lord answers them first with a rather enigmatical statement. He says, “Are not there twelve hours in the day. If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not because he seeth the light of this world, but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth because there is no light in him.”

Now they didn't live like we live with electric lights. We can gain hours of usefulness and work. We don't have just the light of day to work. How many of us would get what we get done if we had only twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness? Now we'd probably look a whole lot better, after all if instead of getting four hours sleep, you got ten or twelve hours sleep, well you

probably would look a whole lot better. I know you would. And if you look at me, I know what you're saying. “You would too.” Well I would. That's true. I would. I'd look a whole lot better. I had about four hours sleep last night. That's enough for any growing man, but still twelve hours a day, that's quite a bit. So the Lord expresses the fact that we should take advantage of the time that we have. It's limited.

Now that is an important principle. That means for you and for me that we have a certain amount of time in which we as believers may serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We will not have it again. We should take advantage of it. And of course if we are unbelievers we should take advantage of our opportunity to become believers and to use our time to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. I mentioned in the reading of the Scriptures that last statement of verse 10 because there is no light in him. Probably our Lord does have some metaphorical sense intended in these words because he is trying to perhaps suggest since he's already said more than once he was the light of the world, for remember that we can never really use our twelve hours properly if we do not follow the light that is within us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world and he is my light too in my life, my Christian life, my life in this world.

Now, after having given that little metaphorical statement he added to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I'm going that I may awaken him out of sleep.” That's a magnificent expression of a believer's death, sleep. We have all kinds of expression. We say, “He has gone.” “He went home.” That's a good Christian expression too. “He went home to be with the Lord,” or around here in Texas I notice a lot of people say, “He passed.” Now what in the world does that mean? [Laughter] “He passed.” That could mean he was playing bridge and he passed. [Laughter] It could mean he was playing tennis and he passed, that is either he didn't return the serve or he managed an ace somehow or another. “He passed.” I always want to say. I never can say it because the circumstances are not suitable for that, but I wanted to say, “Where did he pass? Where did he go?” [Laughter] But I'm not allowed to say that. That's what I want to say though. “He passed.”

Well the Scriptures say of believers, “They fell asleep.” I like that. Eighteen times approximately, the word sleep is used. Fourteen of them it’s used metaphorically of a believer’s death, four times of natural sleep. When the Lord says, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” they thought he meant the sleeping in which snoring takes place that is for most of us. Well, not most of us, some of us. Well, I don't know whether I should say that. When I sleep, snoring takes place, that kind of sleep. But to sleep, what a beautiful figure. Why? Well because a man who is sleeping is alive. You can tell that by the sounds. He’s alive. So the Christian who dies is alive, and then secondly, he’s resting. A person who is sleeping is resting. You say I want to go take a rest. I want to lie down and take a nap. So you are sleeping. You’re resting. And then of course if a person is sleeping you anticipate he will awaken. And the figure of course is a figure of the resurrection. The body will awaken. So when Lazarus’ body is placed in the grave, “He sleeps,” Jesus sleeps. He’s alive, that is his spirit is alive. He’s resting. His body is not active. He’s resting, and further he will have a resurrection. Martha will say, “Yes, I know he will be resurrected in the resurrection at the last day. That is his body will awaken. His spirit is with the Lord. The Bible does not teach soul sleep. It teaches body sleep. The body sleeps in the grave. So our friend Lazarus is sleeping. The sting of death has been drawn for believers in Christ and when they die they sleep. They’re bodies sleep. They are alive. In fact they are alive for the first time in the real life, the kind of life in which there is no death. That’s what it means to be really alive. We possess eternal life now. It will manifest itself in the future when we pass through physical death into the life that is life indeed, never to die again. Well they don't understand. The disciples said, “Lord if he sleeps he does well.” Jesus of course spake of his death. They thought that he had spoken of taking a rest in sleep. So the Lord had to say plainly to them, “Lazarus has died.” And he said, “I am glad for your sakes,” because if I had been there something might have happened and you might not have the experience to see what you are going to see. He says, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”

And so Thomas, people say he's doubting Thomas. No, no, he's really believing Thomas. He's kind of gloomy, I grant you that. He's kind of gloomy. A few things he says make you, you can see why people might have called him doubting Thomas, but he's the person who rises to the highest expression of faith in the New Testament calling the Lord Jesus “My Lord and My God.” And here too you can see his faith, “Let us go also that we may die with him.” He says to the disciples. And he means to die with our Lord, not with Lazarus.

Now when Jesus came he found that he had lain in the grave for four days already. Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem. Many of the Jews from the city evidently had gone out, relatives and friends to comfort Mary and Martha concerning the loss of their brother. And word came to Martha, “Jesus is here.” And so she rushed out to meet him and they have a little conversation, and it's evident that she has faith in his healing power because she said in verse 21, “Lord if you had been here my brother had not died, but I know that even now whatever you will ask of God, God will give it to you.”

Now she doesn't mean that if he just says the word, he will be raised from the dead. That's evident because in a moment when he stands by the tomb and says, “Take away the stone,” she objects. She says, “Lord, by now he stinketh for he hath been dead for four days.” So it's clear her faith is a faith in his healing power, but not yet in his power to raise from the dead. The Lord replies to her. He says to Martha, “Your brother shall rise again.” And she says, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus replies and says, “I am,” that's the style of deity remember? Going all the way back to Exodus chapter 3 when God said, “I am who I am.” So, “I am,” that's designed to impress upon her the fact that he is more than a man. He knows Lazarus had died. He has the ability to see things that have not yet been seen by others. “I am the resurrection and life.” Now this is a strange statement when you first look at it because it is not a figure like “I am the door,” or “I am the good shepherd.” But “I am the resurrection and the life.” That's almost like he's saying an event. How can a person represent an event like the resurrection? “I am the resurrection.” Well, probably because the resurrection is really simply life in victory over death.

That’s all it is. The life that overcomes the experience of death is resurrection life. That’s resurrection, just simply the prolongation of life through the experience of death. So when Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life,” he means simply that if one has the life that I have. If he’s related to me, if he’s in me and I am in him. If there is an identity between the individual and me, if I am your representative head, if I am your federal head and you are in me, then of course you have resurrection, and you have life. You have resurrection life. The only life that will ever overcome death is the life our Lord Jesus Christ possesses. “I am the resurrection” because the life that I possess is the life that overcomes the experience of death. It prevails over it. So, he’s the resurrection and he’s the life.

Martha, it’s important to believe doctrine, that he will rise again in the last day, but I want to point you to the person whose life is the key to resurrection. So, he gives her a present pledge, not simply confirming her future prospects of the resurrection and the last day. But telling her now if she has him, she has resurrection. In fact she has already experienced resurrection for she has the life that has overcome death. Every Christian in this auditorium has already experienced resurrection. You have come from death into life. And you possess the life that will prevail through the experience of physical death. “I am the resurrection. I am the life.” Well that requires a bit of explanation and so our Lord explains it in the next two clauses that follow. He explains resurrection. He explains life. “He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Now concerning whom is he speaking there? When he says, “He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live,” of whom is he speaking? Well, he is speaking, I’m not going to say, “Oh, well dummies,” because I know you’d probably all reply correctly, “He’s speaking of Lazarus.” Notice he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Resurrection we will see in the case of Lazarus. Then he adds a second thing. “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Of whom is he speaking? Dummies. [Laughter] He is speaking of Martha. Right I saw some of you say...Correct. He is speaking of Martha. So you see these two clauses

explain resurrection and life. In the case of Lazarus we have the picture of resurrection, and in the case of Martha we have the picture of life.

Now there may [be] some reference to the future because remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 51 through verse 53 the Apostle Paul has something to say about the rapture of the church. And in that chapter and in those verses, verse 51 through verse 53, the apostle says these things, “Behold I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. He is talking about the fact that not everybody will die like Lazarus has died like Lazarus died, but we shall all be changed. In a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So Paul pictures individuals who are still living and he says, “They are going to be changed.” And he pictures individuals who are in the grave and the decomposition has already taken place. They have been corrupted physically, and he says, “They are going to be raised.” So it’s possible our Lord is referring to that when he says, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” So he looks...this applies to the future, in the future at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, those who have died, though they are dead, they shall live. They shall be resurrected. And further he says, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Now it’s likely that is not specifically what is in view, but it certainly fits the situation. We know that probably spiritual life and spiritual death is in view because of the preceding verse, verse 25 and verse 26 would seem to indicate the same thing. “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die spiritually.” But it is a remarkable expression and it certainly applies to Lazarus and it certainly applies to Martha and what a great comfort it is to know that if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ though we should die physically, we have the life that prevails over death and we shall live. And if we do live and we believe in him we shall maybe die physically as Martha did, but we shall not die spiritually. We have the life that overcomes death. And for believers, life is nothing more than, well as the world might say a temporary accident, but for us it’s really the passage into the

presence of the Lord. We fear it. We look forward to it with fear and dread, but we shall discover as all Christians have in the past that it is simply the way. It's the door into the presence of God.

Now our Lord is the greatest of preachers of course, there is always a place for application. And so he said to Martha, “Believest thou this?” What is your response to this Martha? Do you believe it? Now he is trying to bring her from adherence to the doctrine of the resurrection in the last days, for that's what she said, “I know my brother shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day.” That's good doctrine, but he's trying to bring her from adherence to a doctrine, to confidence in the facts and reality behind the doctrine as well. It's important to know doctrine. But it's also important to know the reality laying back of the doctrine. You cannot hold the reality without the doctrine, but you can at times know the doctrine and not have the reality of the experience, and so he would like for Martha to have both. And notice he calls her from the general resurrection to a personal, “Believest thou this, Martha?” I know the Jews believe this but what about you?

So I say to you this morning, “Believest thou?” our Lord's words. “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Is that your faith? Can you say that I have the assurance of life through Jesus Christ and while I may face death with fear, I know my future is secure, by the power of our great Triune God who through Christ has offered the atoning sacrifice by which I'm delivered from my sins and their penalty and brought into the possession of eternal life. “Believest thou this?” No one can help you to make that decision. I cannot help you. If you're a young person your parents cannot help you. No one can help you. It's your own personal decision to make. May God help you to make it for the glory of God. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these magnificent words of affirmation from the incarnate Son of God. “I am the resurrection and the life.” To have him is to have the event, for the event is nothing other than the prevailing life of the Triune God. We thank Thee for the gift of life

“The Resurrection and the Life,” by S. Lewis Johnson
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through Jesus Christ. How blessed we are. O Father if there are some in this auditorium who have not believed in Christ, draw them to Thyself. Thou hast said, “No man can come...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]