

14. JESUS: RESURRECTION & LIFE

JOHN 11v23-27

Jesus' resurrection is at the heart of the Christian message. It will always be crucial when we share our faith in Jesus. But what do people around us make of this?

Most people have very little interest in whether Jesus was raised from the dead or not. For starters, there are millions of adherents to the major religions of the East who have no place in their belief system for Jesus. And many in the West take the resurrection of Jesus with a pinch of salt. They have their thoughts and beliefs about life after death, but Jesus and His resurrection rarely feature in their thinking. Somehow it doesn't seem relevant. Some are more interested in whether Elvis is alive than if Jesus is alive.

In our text this morning we have Jesus' words about Himself and resurrection.

John 11 vv 25,25. **"I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."** This is one of the great "I AM" statements of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Then he asks Martha **"Do you believe this?"** Her reply was a typical Jewish response at that time. This morning, before I look at what Jesus said to Martha, let's think about the different beliefs about life after death that are around today.

1. OPTIMISM: I'm going to a better place.

Many people simply assume that there is a happy afterlife. Even those who give little thought to God or spiritual things will talk about their departed loved ones "going to a better place", or going to be with family members who have died, or looking down on those who are still living. This is not new. From earliest times men & women seem to have believed in an afterlife. Archaeology provides ample evidence of this in the form of ancient tombs & burial sites. Whether the people were primitive or sophisticated they assumed that there would be life after death. Of course there were countless different ideas about what that after life might be like.

2. IMMORTALITY: My body dies but my soul is immortal.

Without realising it many believe in an after life based on the teachings of the ancient Greek philosophers about Immortality. This is the idea that there is something about man that cannot die. Man is inherently immortal. *"John Brown's body lies a moldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on."* This is something especially associated with a philosopher called Plato, who lived 3 - 400 years before Christ. He divided man into two parts - body & soul. The soul was pre-existent & therefore immortal, whereas the body was mortal; the soul was imprisoned in the body until death. Having a body was a nuisance. When the body died it was "good riddance"! "No need for another one of those thank you very much!" This contrasted with Hebrew thought, which could not conceive of man existing apart from a body. Man was a "living soul" a whole person. We know that Greeks in New Testament times had a real problem with the message of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 17 v18, 31f) Why? - because they believed in the immortality of the soul. They were not at all impressed by talk of resurrected bodies. (We will see that the Bible does speak of Immortality - but on a very different basis.)

3. ATHEISM: when I die – that's it!

Some do not believe there is anything beyond this life. This is the perspective of the atheist. When you're dead you're dead, and that's that. There is no life after death. Oblivion! Just as you had no awareness before birth, so it is in death. In historical terms this is a relatively modern belief. In my experience there are surprisingly few who actually own to this. Most prefer to hedge their bets.

4. SPIRITISM: I will enter the spirit world.

Around 200 - 300 million tribal peoples in the Americas, Africa, Asia & Oceania believe that the spirits of those who have died live on. This primal belief is called Spiritism. The spirits of the dead

(sometimes called the "living dead") have dealings with living people. This spirit world can be engaged through trances & visions. The living must honour these ancestor spirits. Some are friendly & others are either a nuisance or a threat. Much fear associated with this. The detail may differ from tribe to tribe. e.g. .Some believe that the spirits of those who have been slain in inter-village fighting can cause harm & serious illness.

"Spiritualism" is a Western relative of tribal spiritism. It embraces the belief that the spirits of the dead live on & continue to interact with the world of the living. In the last 150 years Spiritualism has come to prominence in the West; kick started in the States in 1847 by two sisters, Margaret & Kate Fox who said they communicated with the spirit of a murdered former tenant of their home in Hydeville, New York; they said they communicated with him by knocks and raps & other noises. The creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a spiritualist. Mediums, spiritists & those practising divination & all occult practices are denounced strongly in the Bible. Some spiritualist claims may be bogus, but the Bible acknowledges that many are not. Rather than talking to the spirits of dead loved ones, it is sometimes demonic powers you are communicating with.

5. REINCARNATION: I will be reborn.

Hindus believe in reincarnation. i.e. when people die they come back to life again as animals or people. Their behaviour in their past life has affected their place in this life; and what they do in this life will decide their place in the next. If people keep the rules of their caste they will be reborn into a higher caste. Eventually, after they have reached the highest (priestly) caste they will stop being reborn - and become part of the god Brahman. But for some, rebirths may go on for ever and ever. Reincarnation is a daunting belief! It is also what lost Glen Hoddle his job as England football coach a few years back!

Buddhism emerged as a reaction to reincarnation. A young man, Siddhartha Gautama, (who lived 500 years before Christ) was deeply moved on seeing a poor beggar covered in sores, then a feeble old man, and then the body of someone who had died. As he grew up he became disturbed over the thought of the endless cycle of birth and rebirth suffered by some. He came to believe that by meditating it was possible to become a better person & the cycle of rebirths halted. He is said to have achieved this state of Nirvana, and thus became known as the Buddha (the Enlightened One). But we believe that Jesus is the real Good News to those bowed down with this belief in reincarnation.

6. RESURRECTION: I will be raised by God to judgment, reward / punishment.

The teaching of Islam, Judaism & Christianity centres on Resurrection. This is an understanding of life after death which revolves around an Almighty God who raises the dead to judgment, reward and punishment.

1. Muslims believe that the dead will be raised for judgment based on whether they have followed and obeyed Allah and Mohammed. However, Jesus' resurrection has no place in their thinking because they do not believe Jesus died on the cross. He appeared to die, but in reality did not. Some Muslims believe *Judas* was put in the place of Jesus, while Jesus went straight to heaven.
1. Jews today & in Jesus time believed (with the exception of the Sadducees) in the resurrection of the body. "The Thirteen Principles of the Faith" state: *"I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at a time when it shall please the Creator."* This is exactly what Martha is expressing here. Jesus says "Your brother will rise again", and she answers "I know that he will rise again at the last day."

v25,26 "I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Jesus extends Martha's belief and sets it on an even surer foundation.

"Yes Martha, you are right in what you believe. Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But I want you to understand this more fully.

I am the key to that future Resurrection". "Don't think in vague terms. You need to have me in your sights when you are thinking of life after death."

The implications of these words are staggering. They cut across every other belief system we have looked at. Jesus Himself is the only hope of men and women after death. What a claim!

And there is something else; Jesus says *"I am the key to that resurrection life beginning right now - eternal life - something that not even death can touch."* It is in this sense that we can speak of true Biblical immortality. Jesus came to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim 1v10) God alone is Immortal (1 Tim 6v15,16), but now by faith we are the children of God; and it is God's children - the children of the resurrection - who "can no longer die". (Luke 20v36). Once you have been born again - you have eternal life. Your body will die one day, but the life of Christ in you can never die.

When you believe in Christ your judgment has already taken place. Your punishment has been taken by Jesus on the cross. There is now no condemnation for you. (John 5v24-29: Romans 8v1ff). This stands in contrast to the historic Roman Catholic doctrine of **Purgatory**: i.e. before you reach heaven you must first be cleansed of every sin committed in mortal life. These sufferings are given to God in substitution for the punishments the believer should have received at the time, but didn't! This Doctrine can be traced back to the Middle Ages & the so called Scholastic period of Church History (approx 5th-15th centuries) – a period when church scholars formulated church doctrine in minute detail, and the church's authority took precedence over Scripture. These scholars gave special attention to the subject of heaven and hell, and they divided the underworld into different departments! They said that there were three intermediate regions between heaven and hell. (i) *Limbus patrum* – for OT saints (ii) *Limbus infantum* – for unbaptised children. (iii) Purgatory – in close proximity to hell. It was here that painful purging of sins took place before entry to heaven was allowed. There was a great dread of Purgatory throughout the Middle Ages because the church portrayed Purgatory's punishments in graphic detail.

In 12/13 century Crusades ("Holy" wars to recover the Holy Land from Muslims) the Popes issued incentives to go on Crusade in the form of "indulgences"; these guaranteed the Crusader entry into heaven and reduced or abolished his time in purgatory. The issue of Purgatory was crucial for the launch of the Reformation. On 31st October 1517 Martin Luther announced "a disputation on indulgences" in his 95 Theses. The Catholic Church was receiving money from the poor to shorten the punishment and reduce the pain of Purgatory. Luther denounced this & the Reformation recovered the Biblical doctrine of Grace in salvation; justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone

Jesus has taken your punishment. He is your substitute.

Bible believing Christians may have different ideas about exactly what happens, and when: but this is how I understand it.

1. When you die (as a Christian) you do not get your resurrection body immediately. That is reserved for the Final Day of Resurrection when this mortal body will put on immortality. (1 Cor 15v53).
1. But in between you do enjoy a life which Jesus describes as immediately being with Christ in "Paradise" (Luke 23v43), and Paul as being "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor.5v8). This is not your final state. You are still waiting for your glorious resurrection body. On that Final Day when you are clothed with your immortal body - then you will be "like him" (1 John 3v2)

"That is our hope - to be with the risen Christ with a body like his glorious body. To know him in a form like his. Our final destiny and our eternal state is not an ethereal, disembodied state in a distant heaven. It is to reign with Christ here on the renewed earth." (John Piper; Sermon 'What happens when you die?')

"I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" What a pity that this question of Jesus is not retained when these words are quoted at funerals. Let me ask this question now, of you.

“Do you believe this?” Do you believe the claim Jesus makes? “I am the resurrection and the life.” Do you believe the promise Jesus gives? “He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” The claim and the promise go together. They cannot be separated. You cannot reject the claim and have the promise. We are not to think in vague terms about life after death, or run after false or sentimental comfort. Jesus Himself is the key to any life after death. He not only came teaching about Resurrection, He said I am the resurrection and the life”.

“But”, some may say, “surely our mental hospitals have their share of people saying such things!” Maybe; but Jesus went on to demonstrate the truth of His words.

vv 32-44 He raises Lazarus, who has been in the grave for four days. This is a mighty sign - one for a massive crowd to see (v42) Jesus is saying: “Look! Here is a sign for you. I am indeed the key to life, now and after death. Look at Lazarus. You can believe my claim. You can believe my promise”.

Yet we have even more than the raising of Lazarus to consider. This was just a shadow. The real sign was still to come. Jesus’ own death & resurrection. On the third day after his crucifixion His tomb was empty. Angels announced, “Why look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen!” Then Jesus appeared to His closest friends; first of all to Mary Magdalene. (John 20v1-30) The resurrection of Jesus is the rock on which we can believe Christ’s claim and His promise to be our only hope for life after death. (1 Corinthians 15v3-6; 14, 17-20)

“I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” A very good question. “What is your response to this claim and this promise of Jesus?” **“Do you believe this?”** It’s not my question. It is Jesus’ question.

John Wilthew. May 2005

14. JESUS: RESURRECTION & LIFE

JOHN 11V23-27

Does it matter what you believe? All around the world - Christians celebrate the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus conquered sin and death. He is not a dead hero - He is a Living Saviour. But does it matter whether you believe in the resurrection of Jesus or not?

1. Our text this morning, Jesus words about Himself and resurrection.

John 11 vv 25,25. One of the great "I AM" statements of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Then he asks "**Do you believe this?**" A question addressed to a woman called Martha, but it is still very relevant today. These words are read at every Christian funeral service. Do you believe this? And does it matter?

Most people have very little interest in whether Jesus was raised from the dead or not. For starters, there are millions of adherents to the major religions of the East who have no place in their belief system for Jesus. And many in the West take the Resurrection of Jesus with a pinch of salt. They have their thoughts and beliefs about life after death - but Jesus and His resurrection rarely feature in their thinking. Somehow it doesn't seem relevant. They are more likely to have their ideas shaped by Movies than the Bible. Some are more interested in whether Elvis is alive than if Jesus is alive. So what do people today believe about life after death? And how does that match up with Jesus? In vv 23, 24 Martha states what she believes. But not everyone agrees. Let's consider six widely held beliefs.

1. An Athiestic Belief: Oblivion.

This sounds a contradiction in terms - An Athiestic belief! But atheists state categorically - there is no God. ie. an absolute declaration (unlike agnostics who are not sure) So they believe that when you're dead you're dead - and that's that. There is no life after death. Death is the final curtain. Oblivion is all that is to come. Just as you had no awareness before birth - so in death. **If Martha had been an atheist** she would have replied differently to Jesus when he said to her "Your brother will rise again." Martha would have answered, "*I know nothing of the kind. He's dead and that's the end of it!*" nb. There are surprisingly few who actually own to this. Most prefer to hedge their bets. Fascinating to see atheists coming to faith in Jesus Christ. eg. David on Alpha Course.

2. An Ancient Belief: Afterlife.

From the earliest times men & women seem to have believed in an afterlife. Archaeology provides ample evidence of this in the form of **ancient tombs & burial sites**. Whether the people were primitive or sophisticated - they assumed that there would be life after death. There have been countless different ideas about what that after life might be like. e.g. Egyptians. Today, even those who normally give God very little thought - often assume that there is a happy afterlife to come. e.g. Regular feature at time of tragedy **If Martha had thought like this**, when Jesus said "Your brother will rise again" she might have said "*I like to think Lazarus is already in a better place, with all those friends & family who died before him.*"

3. A Primal Belief: Spiritism.

200 - 300 million **tribal peoples** in the Americas, Africa, Asia & Oceania believe that the spirits of those who have died - live on. The detail may differ from tribe to tribe. These spirits of the dead (sometimes called the "living dead") have dealings with living people. The living must honour these ancestor spirits. Some are friendly & others are either a nuisance or a threat. Much fear associated with this. eg. the spirits of those who have been slain in inter-village fighting - can cause harm & serious illness. This spirit world can be engaged through trances & visions.

"**Spiritualism**" is a Western relative of Tribal Spiritism. Embraces the belief that the spirits of the dead live on & continue to interact with the world of the living. **If Martha had been a spiritist or spiritualist** when Jesus said "Your brother will rise again" she would have replied "*I know that he is alive and well now, because he has spoken to me from the other side.*" In the last 150 years

Spiritualism has come to prominence in the West; kick started in the States in 1847 by two sisters, Margaret & Kate Fox who said they communicated with the spirit of a murdered former tenant of their home in Hydeville, New York. Communicated with him by knocks and raps & other noises. The creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a spiritualist. It is very popular today with Movie makers. e.g. The film 'Ghost' with Demi Moore and Patrick Swazie. Mediums, spiritists & those practising divination & all occult practices are denounced strongly in the Bible. Some spiritualist claims may be bogus - but the Bible acknowledges that many are not. But, rather than talking to the spirits of dead loved ones - it is demonic powers you are communicating with.

4. An Eastern Belief: Reincarnation.

Hindus believe that when people die they come back to life again as animals or people; their behaviour in their past life has affected their place in this life; and what they do in this life will decide their place in the next. If people keep the rules of their caste they will be reborn into a higher caste. Eventually, after they have reached the highest (priestly) caste they will stop being reborn - and become part of the god Brahman. But for some, rebirths may go on for ever and ever. **If Martha had believed in Reincarnation** she would have replied differently to Jesus when he said "Your brother will rise again". She might have said " *I'm hoping that my brother's good 'karma' means he will be reborn into a higher caste*".

Reincarnation is a daunting belief! In fact **Buddhism** emerged as a reaction to it. Young man Siddhartha Gautama (500 years Before Christ) was deeply moved as a boy on seeing a poor beggar covered in sores, than a feeble old man, and then the body of someone who had died. As he grew up he became disturbed over the thought of the endless cycle of birth and rebirth suffered by some. He came to believe that by meditating it was possible to become a better person & the cycle of rebirths halted. He is said to have achieved this state of Nirvana, and thus became known as the Buddha (the Enlightened One). Jesus is the real Good News to those bowed down with this belief.

5. A Philosophical Belief: Immortality.

Many people believe in an after life based on the idea that there is something about man that cannot die. Man is inherently immortal. "*John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.*" This is something especially associated with a philosopher called **Plato**, who lived 3 - 400 years before Christ. He divided man into two parts - body & soul. The soul was pre-existent & therefore immortal, whereas the body was mortal; the soul was imprisoned in the body until death. When the body was gone - it was "good riddance"! No need for another one of those thank you very much! This contrasted with Hebrew thought, which did not conceive of man existing apart from a body. Man was a "living soul" a whole person. Nevertheless Plato's ideas influenced many of the Early Christian writers, and you will still find them today. We know that Greeks in NT times had a real problem with the message of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 17 v18, 31f) Why? Because they believed in the immortal soul. The body was a nuisance.

If Martha had believed in Immortality she would have replied differently to Jesus words "Your brother will rise again.". "*I know - Lazarus' body lies a mouldering in the grave, But his soul goes marching on.*" The Bible does speak of Immortality - but alongside our next "Belief" - Resurrection..

6. A Biblical Belief: Resurrection.

An understanding of life after death that revolves around an Almighty God who raises the dead to Judgement, Reward and Punishment.

1. **Muslims** hold a belief in resurrection. The dead will be raised for Judgement based on whether you have followed and obeyed Allah and Mohammed. Jesus' resurrection has no place in their thinking because they do not believe Jesus died on the cross. He appeared to die - but in reality did not. Many Muslims believe Judas was put in the place of Jesus, while Jesus went straight to heaven.
1. **Jews** in Jesus time (with the exception of the Sadducees) believed in the resurrection of the body, but it was a rather remote belief. e.g. "The Thirteen Principles of the Faith": "*I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at a time when it shall please the Creator.*"

This is exactly what Martha is expressing here. Jesus says "Your brother will rise again", and she answers "I know that he will rise again at the last day."

1.v25,26 "I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Jesus extends her belief and sets it on an even surer foundation.

"Yes Martha, you are right in what you believe. Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But I want you to understand this more fully.

I am the key to that future Resurrection". "Don't think in vague terms. You need to have me in your sights when you are thinking of life after death."

The implications of these words are staggering. They cut across every other Belief system we have looked at. And something else as well, Jesus says "I am the key to that resurrection life beginning right now - eternal life - something that not even death can touch."

It is in this sense that we can speak of true Biblical immortality. Jesus came to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light through the gospel.

(2 Tim 1v10) God alone is Immortal (1 Tim 6v15,16), but now by faith we are the children of God; and it is God's children - the children of the resurrection - who "can no longer die". (Luke 20v36).

1. Once you have been born again - you have eternal life. Your spirit, which was dead, is alive. So now, even though you still have a mortal body - the life of Christ in you can never die.
2. The Scriptures teach that when you die (as a Christian) you do not get your resurrection body immediately. That is reserved for the Final Day of Resurrection when this mortal body will put on immortality. (1 Cor 15v53).
3. But in between you do enjoy a life which Jesus describes as immediately "being with me in Paradise" (Luke 23v43), and Paul as being "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor.5v8). This is not your final state. You are still waiting for your glorious resurrection body. And on that Final Day when you are clothed with your immortal body - then you will be "like him" (1 John 3v2)

"That is our hope - to be with the risen Christ with a body like his glorious body. To know him in a form like his. Our final destiny and our eternal state is not an ethereal, disembodied state in a distant heaven. Its is to reign with Christ here on the renewed earth." (John Piper; Sermon 'What happens when you die?')

"I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in me will live, even though he dies., and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

1. Do you believe the claim Jesus makes? "I am the resurrection and the life"
2. Do you believe the promise Jesus gives? "He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

The claim and the promise go together. They cannot be separated.

You cannot reject the claim and have the promise. Don't think in vague or general terms about life after death. Don't run after false or sentimental comfort. Jesus Himself is the key to any life after death. He not only came teaching about Resurrection, He said I am the resurrection and the life".

"But", you may say, "surely our mental hospitals have their share of people saying such things!" Jesus goes on to demonstrate the truth of His words by action.

1. **vv 32-44 He raises Lazarus.** This is his mighty sign. One for a massive crowd to see (v42) Here is a sign for you. Writ large. "I am indeed the key to life, now and after death. Look at Lazarus".

Jesus' claim and promise may need to change your thinking. Fortunately we have more than the raising of Lazarus to consider. This was just a shadow. The real sign was still to come. Jesus own death & resurrection.

What about you this morning? What is your response to Jesus' claim and His promise? Do you believe this? It's not my question. It is Jesus' question.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

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If Martha had been an atheist she would have replied differently to Jesus words in v23. *"I know nothing of the kind. He's dead and that's the end of it!"*

2. An Ancient Belief: Afterlife.

From the earliest times men & women seem to have believed in an after life.

1. **Archaeology** provides ample evidence of this in the form of ancient tombs & burial sites. Whether the people were primitive or sophisticated - they assumed that there would be life after death. There have been countless different ideas about what that after life might be like. e.g. Egyptians.

2. **Today**, even among those who normally give God or the meaning of life very little thought - there is usually an assumption of a happy after life to come. e.g. Regular feature at time of tragedy.

If Martha had thought like this she might have said *"I like to think Lazarus is already in a better place, with all those friends & family who died before him."*

3. A Primal Belief: Spiritism.

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2. Spirituality is a Western relative of Tribal Spiritism. Belief that the spirits of the dead live on, and continue to interact with the world of the living. Spirituality's roots go back to ancient days. e.g. Egypt spiritist practices including magic, sorcery and speaking to the dead. Such things were denounced strongly in the OT. Mediums, spiritists, divination & all occult practices. In the last 150 years it has come to prominence again; kick started in the States in 1847 by two sisters, Margaret & Kate Fox who said they communicated with the spirit of a murdered former tenant of their home in

Hydeville, New York. Communicated with him by knocks and raps & other noises. The creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a spiritualist. It is very popular today with Movie makers. e.g. The film 'Ghost' with Demi Moore and Patrick Quazie

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4. An Eastern Belief: Reincarnation.

1. **Hindus** believe that when people die they come back to life again - as animals or people; the way they behaved in their past life has affected their place in this life, and what they do in this life will decide their place in the next. If people keep the rules of their caste they will be reborn into a higher caste. Eventually, after they have reached the highest (priestly) caste they will stop being reborn - and become part of the god Brahman. But for some, rebirths may go on for ever and ever.

2. **Buddhism** emerged as a reaction to this. Young man Siddhartha Gautama (500 years Before Christ) was deeply moved as a boy on seeing a poor beggar covered in sores, than a feeble old man, and then the body of someone who had died. As he grew up he became disturbed over the thought of the endless cycle of birth and rebirth suffered by some. He came to believe that by meditating it is possible to become a better person, so that the cycle is halted. He is said to have achieved this state of Nirvana, and thus became known as the Buddha (the Enlightened One)

NB: It was expressing belief in reincarnation that cost Glen Hoddle his England coach's job.

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5. A Philosophical Belief: Immortality.

Many people believe in an after life based on the idea that there is something about man that cannot die. Man is immortal. "John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on." This is something especially associated with a philosopher called **Plato**, who lived 3 - 400 years before Christ. He divided man into two parts - body & soul. The soul was pre-existent & therefore immortal, whereas the body was mortal; the soul was imprisoned in the body until death. This contrasted with Hebrew thought, which did not conceive of man existing apart from a body. Man was a "living soul" a whole person. Nevertheless Plato's ideas influenced many of the Early Christian writers, and you will still find them today.

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6. A Theological Belief: Resurrection.

An understanding of life after death that revolves around belief in an Almighty God who gives life, takes life, and raises the dead to Judgement, Reward and Punishment.

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1. **v25,26** Jesus extends her belief and sets it on an even surer foundation.

"Yes Martha, you are right in what you believe. Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. But I want you to understand this more fully.

I am the key to that future Resurrection. "Don't think in vague terms. You need to have me in your sights when you are thinking of life after death." **And something else as well - I am the key to that resurrection life beginning right now - eternal life - something that not even death can touch."**

He asks **“Do you believe this?”**

1. Do you believe the claim Jesus made? “I am the resurrection and the life”

2. Do you believe the promise Jesus gave? “he who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

The claim and the promise go together. They cannot be separated.

You cannot reject the claim and have the promise. Don't think in vague or general terms about life after death. Jesus Himself is the key to any life after death. He not only came teaching about Resurrection, He said I am the resurrection and the life”.

“But”, you may say, “surely our mental hospitals have their share of people saying such things!” Jesus goes on to demonstrate the truth of His words by action.

1. **vv 32-44** He raises Lazarus. This is his mighty sign. One for a massive crowd to see (v42) Here is a sign for you. Writ large. “I am indeed the key to life, now and in the future. Look at Lazarus”.

Jesus' claims and promises may need to change your thinking. Fortunately we have more than the raising of Lazarus to consider. This was just a shadow. The real sign was still to come. Jesus own death. His own resurrection. Romans 1v4.

What about you this morning? What is your response to Jesus' claim and His promise? Do you believe this? It's not my question. It is Jesus' question.

Read John 11 vv1-27

1. **John chapter 11.** This is a very important incident in John's Gospel. After the Religious leaders rejection Jesus had taught in parables and healed people quietly in response to their faith & their need. Nothing very public. Again & again the authorities pestered Jesus for a big public sign to prove He was the Messiah. But he refused. However, he did promise to give them one more sign in due course, the sign of Jonah, the sign of death & resurrection.
1. **vv 1-16** Death of His friend. Stayed where he was 2 days. Why? Deliberate.
1. **vv 17-20** Jesus comes openly to Jerusalem. He is about to do something mighty out in the open. Could this be the one last sign he has promised? He arrives 4 days after Lazarus has died. The sisters chide him for this. But he has delayed deliberately so that no one can be in any doubt that Lazarus was truly dead. What he is about to do cannot be said to be a resuscitation. Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead. A very public sign.

