

John 11:25-26 "I Am the Resurrection" \*\*

Main Idea: In John 11:25-26 Jesus made an astounding claim when He announced, "I am the resurrection." By examining that claim we will learn three important things about Jesus.

Question: Who did Jesus claim to be?

I. We learn who Jesus is.

- A. He is eternal.
- B. He is the resurrection and the life.
  - 1. He possesses resurrection life.
  - 2. He is resurrection life.
  - 3. He gives resurrection life.

II. We learn what Jesus can do.

- A. He enables the dead to live again.
- B. He enables those who believe in Him to never die.

III. We learn what we must do with Jesus.

- A. We must believe His word.
- B. We must believe He is the Christ.

The Test: Is there evidence that Jesus' claim is true?

- 1. He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44).
- 2. He raised others from the dead (Mark 5:41-42; Matt. 11:5; 27:52-53).
- 3. He Himself was raised from the dead (John 20:1-9).
- 4. He is raising sinners from the dead (John 20:30-31).
- 5. He will raise those who believe in Him from the dead (John 6:39-40).

Have you ever heard of Leonard "Live Forever" Jones? Apparently, he was born in Kentucky in 1797 and lived in Louisville most of his life. If you had lived in our area 150 years ago or so, you probably would have known the name. Mr. Jones was a politician who ran repeatedly to be president of the United States as well as governor of Kentucky. His platform? He claimed that he was *immortal*.

Pretty good platform, huh? "Vote for me. I won't die."

Jones formed the "High Moral" party in his attempt to spread his ideas. He proclaimed that anyone

could achieve what he had achieved, mortality through a regimen of prayer and fasting. Not surprisingly, he never succeeded in his campaigns for public office. He attracted large crowds who cheered him on as he made his claims, but most just considered him "a harmless curiosity" (as Wikipedia describes him).

In 1868 Leonard "Live Forever" Jones caught pneumonia, but refused medical treatment due to his belief that sickness was moral at its base. He died on August 30, 1868.[1](#)

It's easy to make a claim. It's quite another thing to have the wherewithal to support that claim. What would you think of a person that grew up down the road from you who claimed to be immortal? Not much probably, if he couldn't back up his claim.

That's what makes this day, Resurrection Sunday, so significant. On the day we call Good Friday they nailed to the cross the One who claimed to be eternal Son of God. But on the third day the One who died demonstrated the validity of His claim by walking out of His tomb alive!

I want us to think about the claims of Jesus this morning. Who did Jesus say He was? The fact is, Jesus made claims regarding His identity. And He even made claims regarding His claims!

For instance, He said in John 8:24, "If you do not believe that **I am the one I claim to be**, you will indeed die in your sins." That's a staggering announcement. Jesus said that if we do not believe Him to be who He claimed to be, then we will die in our sins. I'd say that's pretty good incentive for finding out who He claimed to be, wouldn't you agree?

And then He took it a step further in John 8:28, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I am the one I claim to be...**" Jesus said that when He was lifted up, that is, crucified, then people would know that He is the one He claimed to be.

So the question is, who did He claim to be? In reality, He made a host of amazing claims. Let's read the Gospel of John and take note of His "I am" statements.

John 6:35 "Then Jesus declared, "**I am the bread of life**. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

John 6:48 "**I am the bread of life**."

John 6:51 "**I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever..."

John 8:12 "**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 9:5 "While I am in the world, **I am the light of the world**."

John 10:7 "I tell you the truth, **I am the gate** for the sheep."

John 10:9 "**I am the gate**; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture."

John 10:11 "**I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

John 10:14 "**I am the good shepherd**; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

John 14:6 "**I am the way and the truth and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:11 "Believe me when I say that **I am in the Father** and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

John 15:1 "**I am the true vine**, and my Father is the gardener."

John 15:5 "**I am the vine**; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

And in the final book of the Bible we hear some more of His claims...

Revelation 1:18 "**I am the Living One**; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Revelation 22:13 "**I am the Alpha and the Omega**, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. **I am the Root and the Offspring of David**, and the bright Morning Star."

Each of those claims is worthy of our attention, and I recommend them for further study. But there's one more claim that deserves our attention today on Resurrection Sunday. It's what Jesus said in John 11:25-26 when He announced, "I am the resurrection."

He didn't say, "I will be raised from the dead," although He did make that claim elsewhere (Mark 10:34). This claim is not about what He would do, but who He was. *I am the resurrection*. Why did Jesus say that, and what did He mean by it? We need to know, for again He said, "If you do not believe that **I am the one I claim to be**, you will indeed die in your sins."

By examining His claim in John 11:25-26, we'll learn three things about Jesus.

## I. We learn who Jesus is (25a).

Verse 25—"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'"

There's a context to Jesus' claim and we must consider it to appreciate it. The text says that Jesus said this *to her*, to Martha. He said it because Martha's brother, Lazarus, had died and had been buried four days earlier.

Martha and her sister, Mary, had actually called for Jesus while their brother was still living. "Lord, the one you love is sick," was their message in verse 1.

But Jesus delayed His coming, announcing in verse 4, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Jesus actually waited until Lazarus died before He made the journey to Bethany.

Martha was bewildered and told Him so in verse 21, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She knew Jesus had the power to heal the sick. What she didn't understand was why He didn't in her brother's case.

I'm amazed by her faith as evidenced by her words in verse 22, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." The implication? God will give you my brother's beating heart again, Jesus, if you'll ask Him.

To which Jesus replied in verse 23, "Your brother will rise again." How did Jesus know that? How could He so confidently announce what was going to happen to Lazarus in the future? Because He knows the future, indeed, He holds the future.

Martha persisted in verse 24, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Do you see what Martha is doing? She's trying to tell Jesus what He meant by what He just said. He said, "Your brother will rise again." She assumes He's talking about the final resurrection and replies, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

She knew that because she knew her Bible. She knew what David had said in Psalm 16:9-11: "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

*I know that's going to happen to Lazarus, said Martha. I know he'll be raised in the final resurrection.*

At which point Jesus declared in verse 25, "I am the resurrection and the life." That's quite a claim, isn't it? He's transitioned from talking about the future to Himself. With those powerful words Jesus reveals two of His attributes.

**A. He is eternal.** He is the "I AM." "*I am* the resurrection and the life." Of course, those words just about got Jesus stoned two chapters earlier when He announced in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" Jesus Christ, while being 100 percent human, is also the self-existent and equal with God the Father, Son of God. He is the eternal *I am*.

**B. He is the resurrection and the life.** Notice the order, first resurrection, then life. As Hendriksen explains, "Resurrection opens the gate to immortal life."<sup>[2]</sup> I am the resurrection, says Jesus, and the life.

But what does He mean? What is He communicating by that claim? I see three truths wrapped up in those words.

1. *He possesses resurrection life.* Again, it's not something He will possess, but what He *is* in the present. He Himself is the resurrection and the life. John 1:4 declares, "In Him was life." That's how He could create the universe.

The evolutionist cannot explain the origin of life, not to my satisfaction. How did non-living material become living? How did chemicals in the primeval soup come to life (let alone, where did the chemicals come from in the first place)? The answer? Time and random chance. I'll be honest. I don't have enough faith to believe that.

But I don't need to because I know where life originated. The One who Himself is life chose to create life. He didn't have to find it for He possesses it. What's more...

2. *He is resurrection life.* I identify what resurrection and life is, says Jesus. It is Me. Jesus spelled out the implication of this when He said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life [that's who I am]. No one comes to the Father except through me." In light of who I am, if you want to go to heaven and enjoy eternal life with the Father, you must come through Me.

3. *He gives resurrection life.* Martha, the One who has the power to raise your brother from the dead in the final day has the power to raise him from the dead right now, if He so chooses.

By the way, do Jesus' words allow for the belief in reincarnation? While studying the Greek word translated "resurrection," I found a helpful comment in *The Greek-English Lexicon*, "In a number of languages there is a difficulty involved in formulating some expression for 'resurrection' or 'living again,' since such a phrase may refer to what is technically known as metempsychosis, that is to say, the rebirth of the soul in another existence, a belief which is widely held in a number of areas of south Asia. This problem may be avoided in some languages by speaking of 'his body will live again' or 'his body will come back to life' or 'he will be the same person when he lives again.'"<sup>[3]</sup>

Let there be no misunderstanding. This is what Jesus gives, not the rebirth of a soul in another existence, but resurrection life. The term "resurrection" comes from the verb "to rise, to rise up, to rise again, to rise again after laying down, to stand up." Jesus isn't talking about Lazarus coming back as a different creature. He says that Lazarus will come back *as Lazarus*, and you'll know him, Martha.

So who is Jesus? Hear His claim. He is the eternal one, the I Am. He is the resurrection and the life,

and as such He possesses resurrection life, He is resurrection life, and He gives resurrection life.

May I say this to you, my non-Christian friend? I am so glad you are here today, and here's why. You are learning right now about the One who is life itself. If Jesus' claim is true, then so is this. You need Jesus, because if you don't have Jesus, you don't have life. Real life is found only in the person who is life itself, and I pray you'll come to know Him today!

But there's more to His claim. Listen to what else He told Martha in verses 25-26, "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." From His claim, first we learn who Jesus is. Second...

## II. We learn what Jesus can do (25b-26a).

He told Martha that He can do two things, and these put Him in a class all by Himself.

**A. He enables the dead to live again.** "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." If your doctor said that to you, you'd head for the door immediately. If he said, "Listen. You have a terminal disease. But if you'll just believe in me, you'll live even though you die." From the lips of a mere mortal, that claim is ludicrous.

But Jesus is no mere mortal. He is the virgin-born God-man. He left heaven and came to earth so that the dead could live again *through Him*. If you believe in Me, He said, you will live even though you die.

That's not the only time Jesus said this. He told a hostile group in John 5:21, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." Incredible. Jesus said He can give life to anyone He chooses. He has the power to enable the dead to live again. That claim infuriated the religious Jews, but He didn't back down.

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," He said in John 6:44, "and I will raise him up at the last day."<sup>[4]</sup>

What can Jesus do? He enables the dead to live again. But there's more. He told Martha He can do something else.

**B. He enables those who believe in Him to never die.** Hear His words again, "And whoever lives and believes in me will never die (26)." Let that sink in. *Will never die.*

How can that be? Jesus' followers die, don't they? Yes, they do, and some in very terrible ways. Martyrdom. Cancer. It's appointed unto man to die once, says Hebrews 9:27. We're all going to die once (unless the Lord returns first).

I think Jesus is talking about the *ultimate* death. The Bible calls it "the second death" in Revelation 20:14, which is "the lake of fire." Jesus' people have no fear of the lake of fire for the second death holds no power over them. And this isn't an isolated text. Jesus said in John 8:51, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

I used to be afraid of dying. I remember laying on my bed at night as a child and wondering, "What's going to happen to me when I leave this world?" I could not shake the anxiety. And then a pastor shared with me the most amazing words, and I now share them with you, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life (1 John 5:11-12)."

For many in the world, death is the great enemy, the foe they cannot avoid nor defeat. But for Jesus' followers, death is merely a door, a passageway from life with Jesus here to the fullness of never-ending life with Jesus there. As Leon Morris explains, "The moment a man puts his trust in Jesus he begins to experience that life of the age to come which cannot be touched by death."<sup>[5]</sup>

And that brings us to our third point. From His words to Martha we learn, first, who Jesus is, then secondly, what Jesus can do. Thirdly...

### III. We learn what we must do with Jesus (26b).

At the end of verse 26 Jesus asked Martha an important question, "Do you believe this?" That question is significant. It points out that Jesus isn't being philosophical here with this resurrection talk. He's giving comfort to a grieving sister. So this is truth for everyday life. But to benefit from it, the proper response is necessary.

And what is that response? What is it we must do with Jesus and His claim? It's a one word answer. *Believe.*

"Do you believe this?" asked Jesus. Do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that I can give life to someone who is dead, and that through me he or she will live forever? Do you believe what I am telling you, Martha? Do you believe my word?

Don't miss the fact that there's a content to saving faith. Just believing something isn't enough. Martha believed something specific, and so must we.

**A. We must believe His word.** Which means...

**B. We must believe He is the Christ.**

Like Martha did in verse 27, "'Yes, Lord,' she told him, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'"

My friend, if you want to experience eternal life, you must do what this woman did by the grace of God. You must believe in the Savior's word and believe that He indeed is the God-sent Christ.

I'm not talking about religion. I'm talking about putting your total trust in Jesus and His claim.

At this point you ought to be asking yourself a question, and it's this. "How do I know His claim is true?" That's a legitimate question because in reality, claims can be false. Remember Leonard 'Live Forever' Jones? What makes Jesus any different than Leonard "Live Forever" Jones? Or Mohammed? Or Jim Jones? Or any other person who claimed to offer eternal life? The simple answer is, *evidence.*

Last week I read in *Voice of the Martyrs* the fascinating story of the 42 martyrs of Ammoria. I'd never heard the story before. In A.D. 838 Arab armies invaded Ammoria, located in modern day Turkey, and took control of the city. They killed or sold many of the Christians there. In addition, they captured 42 Christian commanders from the army of the Byzantine emperor, Theophilus, and took them as hostages to Samarra (in modern day Iraq). Then they threw them in prison where they remained for seven years.

The Muslim leaders told these prisoners, "Mohammed is the true prophet and not Christ."

The commanders replied, "If there were two men debating about a field and the one said, 'This field is mine' and the other said, 'It is not, it is mine,' and nearby one of them had many witnesses saying it is his field and the other had no witnesses, but only himself, what would you say – whose field is it?"

The Muslims answered, "Indeed, to him who had many witnesses."

"You have judged correctly," the commanders said. "That is the way with Christ and Mohammed. Christ has many witnesses: the Prophets of old, from Moses to John the Forerunner, whom you also recognize and who witness to and about Him [Christ], but Mohammed witnesses only to himself that he is a prophet and does not have even one witness."

For seven years the imprisoned Christians were coerced to embrace the Islamic faith, but they refused to deny Christ. And so in 845 they were beheaded and their bodies were thrown into the Euphrates River.<sup>[6]</sup>

It's time for a test, a one question test.

### The Test: Is there evidence that Jesus' claim is true?

He claimed to be the resurrection and the life. Is there evidence? Yes, and here it is.

1. *He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44)*. It's one of my favorite passages in the Bible. I wish I had a DVD recording of the scene described in John 11:43-44, "Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'"

That's what I call evidence to support a claim! And the evidence was so convincing that many Jews put their trust in Jesus once they saw what He did for Lazarus (that's what verse 45 says).

In fact, in John 12 we're told that so many people were turning to Jesus because of Lazarus that the chief priests actually made plans to kill Lazarus (12:10). To borrow from the title of Josh McDowell's book, they were seeing *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, so they decided to get rid of the evidence.

But there's more evidence of His claim. It wasn't just Lazarus.

2. *He raised others from the dead (Mark 5:41-42; Matt. 11:5; 27:52-53)*. For instance, there was the daughter of a synagogue ruler named Jairus. We read what Jesus did for her in Mark 5:41-42, "He took her by the hand and said to her, '*Talitha koum!*' (which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished."

And there were others. In Matthew 11:5 Jesus sent this message to John the Baptist who was in prison and apparently having second thoughts, "Report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, *the dead are raised.*" How many dead people did Jesus raise? I don't know but it's plural.

Here's another text. Matthew 27:52-53 tells us that the moment Jesus died, "The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people."

There's evidence for you! Can you imagine the shock of seeing your loved ones knock on your door and say, "May I come in?"? But no evidence supports His claim like the next...

3. *He Himself was raised from the dead (John 20:1-9)*. Of course, Jesus predicted His resurrection on multiple occasions (as in Mark. 8:31; 9:9; 10:34). But few people seemed to expect it. I can't blame them. After all, they saw His bloodied body as it hung on the cross and then was placed in the tomb. And it didn't make sense to them why He walked into the death trap in the first place. What would the Messiah choose to die? We know that He died as a substitute for sinners because we know the rest of the story.

We've read the record of the evidence, haven't we? Like this record, penned by the apostle John himself, an eye witness (John 20:3-9): "So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that

Jesus had to rise from the dead.)”

I love Peter’s statement in Acts 2:24, “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” What was impossible? For death to hang on to Jesus. He is the resurrection, and resurrection and death can’t coexist.

But the evidence isn’t just ancient history, as important as that is. In reality, the One who raised Lazarus and others from the dead, and who Himself raised from the dead, is still demonstrating His resurrection power! That’s right...

4. *He is raising sinners from the dead (John 20:30-31).* I know He did with me! I was dead in my sins for the first eleven years of my life, but then the Risen Savior caused my dead heart to start beating again, and He gave me eternal life. How about you?

That’s the point of this Gospel, according to John 20:30-31, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

He’s doing it even as I speak. Right now, all over this world Jesus is raising sinners from the dead. He is giving them His resurrection life. It becomes theirs the moment they believe in His powerful name.

Do you believe? The evidence is clear, my friend. He who claimed to be the resurrection and the life has verified His claim again and again. You can believe Him. You *must* believe Him for there’s no one else who can do what He can do.

Which brings me to the last piece of evidence, one that’s yet to come.

5. *He will raise those who believe in Him from the dead (John 6:39-40).* Hear His words in John 6:39-40, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard\\_Jones\\_\(politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Jones_(politician))

[2] William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, p. 150.

[3] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (1:262). New York: United Bible societies.

[4] 1 Cor. 15:21 “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.”

[5] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 550.

[6] *Voice of the Martyrs*, April 2010, p. 10.