

August 06, 2023

“I AM” – Jesus
“I AM the Resurrection and the Life”

A man was flying home from a trip on an airliner, and noticed the highway to go home was stopped in a major traffic jam. He saw that many people were getting out of their cars. Some were standing on their bumpers, straining to see what was going on, and why they had come to a complete halt. The man was able to see from above what people below could not see far ahead, where the red lights of emergency vehicles were, and how the traffic was beginning to move. So, when he got off the plane and into his car and came up to the tail end of the traffic, he was not concerned like the frustrated people stuck ahead of him. **What a difference perspective makes!**

And so it is in our lives, that at Street Level God’s perspective is often confusing. When life unexpectedly gets all jammed up: We stand on our bumper trying to figure it all out... We wonder...

Why are there so many barriers in our way?

Why doesn’t God do something!?! Why did he let this happen?

If God really does exist, and if God really loves us, why doesn’t he help us right now!?! (when our loved one is sick and dying?) Why does he let so much pain take place?

If he is all powerful and all loving, why doesn’t he do something?!

**That is our STREET-LEVEL perspective.
BUT what are we missing? God’s perspective!**

I. God’s perspective is often PUZZLING

Just because we don’t understand something doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense.

John 11:1–4 (NIV) Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” ⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

This is God’s perspective—THE MAIN POINT—for this chapter AND for EVERY chapter of our lives! That God’s Son, Jesus may be HONORED throughout our lives! —every chapter...

QUESTION: When life gets jammed up, can we honor God at street level ... even when we CAN’T see God’s perspective?

If so, how?

Jesus saw right through what looked like a terrible thing at street level because he knew his Father's good purpose for it.

Let's see the next puzzling statement.

John 11:5-6 (NIV) ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,

Does that sound like love on the street level? Not to Mary and Martha.

- The last thing they expected was for Jesus to intentionally DELAY his coming to them!
- Their perspective is only at street level. They don't see what's coming at all.
- Can we remember this when we don't see what we expect?

God's delays are delays of love. He sees a bigger, better picture.

- Does it feel like love yet? No.
- Is it? Yes.

Let's see the next puzzling statement.

John 11:11-15 (NIV) After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." ¹² His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad..."? **That sounds cruel. But is it?**

God is working out his bigger better chapter for their lives (and ours)!

We want Jesus to fix things right away because we are in pain. We convince ourselves he must do this, or he is not a loving God.

We are like toddlers who throw a tantrum because we don't understand our parent's love and wisdom, giving us what we really need more!

What we want is too small. He's giving us something far better.

Jesus finally arrives in Bethany. **Let's see the next set of puzzling statements.**

John 11:21-24 (NIV) "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever

you ask.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Because Jesus was not talking about the distant future someday.

John 11:25–26 (NIV) *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*

At first reading these statements sound confusing, don't you think?

FIRST: The CLAIM: *“I am the resurrection and the life.”*

Puzzling explanation # 1: *The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;*

Puzzling explanation # 2: *and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*

On the surface, it sounds like his two explanation statements are in conflict, and don't quite fit together. **Which is it?:** # 1 *“even though we die”* and # 2 *“will never die.”*

#1: “Even though we die” is talking about PHYSICAL DEATH, but # 2 is TALKING about SPIRITUAL DEATH. Let me explain.

PHYSICAL DEATH: is a separation of our human SOUL (Mind, Will, Emotions, personality) from our body.

SPIRITUAL DEATH: is a separation of our human SOUL (Mind, Will, Emotions, personality) from GOD.

Because of humanity's sin (Adam and Eve, and ever since), we are born physically alive, but SPIRITUALLY DEAD, separated from our designed union with GOD.

One time Jesus used both of these definitions of DEATH in one sentence... *“Let the dead bury their dead, you come follow me”.* He said that for the guy who made the excuse to delay following Jesus until after his father died and he took care of his obligations as the firstborn, burying his father...and I might add, receiving his inheritance. Jesus saw through the excuse.

Now explanation line # 2 makes sense: *and whoever lives by believing in me will never die (even though we die physically).*

We are not SPIRITUALLY ALIVE until we live by believing in him... and once we are SPIRITUALLY ALIVE... we will NEVER EXPERIENCE SEPARATION FROM GOD AGAIN—

We will NEVER DIE (Dying physically, we are immediately with God, awaiting the fulfillment of new Resurrection bodies...)

I. God's perspective is often PUZZLING
II. God's Perspective is always TRUSTWORTHY

FINISH THE FULL STATEMENT: .

*“God’s perspective is often **PUZZLING...BUT...**”*

say it: God’s Perspective is always TRUSTWORTHY

Don’t just take my word for it. In fact JESUS HIMSELF does far more than give us his word for it. He didn’t just come to TALK ABOUT what we didn’t know. He SHOWED us what we didn’t know.

He substantiated his claim with power.

John 11:39 (NIV) “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

Does an offensive odor stop Jesus? No. How many of you think there was still an odor in the tomb when they opened it? Can’t prove it, but I do.

Imagine that scene.

- They roll away the stone.
- Jesus shouts *“Lazarus, come out!”*
- The whole crowd stares into that dark tomb. There’s a gasp.
- Someone says, *“look something is moving!”* Barely visible in the dark tomb you see something move off the edge of a stone ledge, there is movement toward the opening, and light reveals from the bottom up, a shape that takes form... and there stands **a moving mummy.**
- Jesus instructs, *“Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”*
- Mary and Martha run to him and unwrap him. They cry. They laugh. They dance around. Everything changed from mourning to dancing. A party breaks out at the funeral!

When life unexpectedly gets all jammed up: We can stand on our bumper trying to figure it all out on our own... or we can choose to trust Jesus for his plan and our very best life story, which is all about him!

John 11:25–26 (NIV) [JESUS SAYS TO YOU] “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

What will it be for you?

Talk It Over

"I AM" -Jesus

(Week 5) "I Am the Resurrection and the Life"

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt like God was silent or distant? How did you handle it, and what did you learn from that experience?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read John 11:1-16.** How do you think Mary and Martha felt when Jesus didn't arrive in time to heal Lazarus before he died?
3. **Read John 11:17-37.** How does Jesus respond to each of them, and what does this reveal about His character?
4. **Read John 11:38-44.** What does this miracle reveal about Jesus' power and authority? How might this event have impacted the faith of those who witnessed it?
5. **Read John 11:45-57.** Why do you think the Pharisees reacted negatively to the miracle they witnessed? What does this reveal about their hearts?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. How does John 11 impact your understanding of Jesus? How can you deepen your trust in Him as the giver of eternal life?
7. How can you grow in patience and trust in God's timing, even when it doesn't align with yours?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

What specific actions can we take to demonstrate our faith and reliance on Him in our daily challenges and struggles even when we do not know God's perspective on the matter yet?