

The Glory of Christ: Lessons from John's Gospel
“I Am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:1-57)

1. Introduction.

- a) *One of the great truths we celebrate at this conference is ‘the sovereignty of God.’*
 - i) God’s sovereignty in *creation* (=Gen 1; Rev 4:11).
 - ii) God’s sovereignty in *history, providence* (=Ps 33:6-11; Isa 46:8-13; Rom 11:33-36).
 - iii) God’s sovereignty in *salvation* (=Josh 24:2-4; Deut 7:7-11; Eph 1:4-6; Rom 9).
 - iv) God’s sovereignty *for all-eternity* (=1 Cor 15:20-28; Rev 21-22).

- b) *However, one of the entailments of living under rule/authority of a sovereign God is that God has right/authority to do what he wants, when he wants, the way he wants, without consulting us.* Examples of people who had to learn this lesson.

- c) *It must immediately be added that even though God is sovereign and does all things for his own glory – it is important to say that for his people, he always acts for our good.* See Rom 8:28ff. This does *not* entail that it is always easy. But it is a reminder that God is not only sovereign, he is good – completely trustworthy. But this does *not* mean we always understand his ways – he often *surprises* us. God often carries out his plan in ways we don’t expect.

- d) *How does Scripture convey/teach these truths?* Many ways... but one crucial way is via irony. Have you ever-noticed how large portions of Scripture are written with a deep ironic twist and that a good many of these ironic portions are found in narratives? *Why?* Because *irony* is a way of teaching us that God is sovereign and he does things in ways we don’t often expect. Examples.

- e) *Probably the NT book that is most famous for irony is John’s Gospel.* And probably one of the most ironic chapters in the entire book is *John 11*. From beginning to end it is written with a deep ironic twist. With that in mind, if we are going to begin to understand this chapter; to learn afresh to trust our sovereign God; as well as gloriously understand one of the most famous ‘I AM’ statements of our Lord and how it relates to us today, we need to see how this chapter is embedded in deep irony. Let us now unpack this chapter by dividing it into *4 sections*, each with a deep ironic twist: (1) Vv 1-16; (2) Vv 17-27; (3) Vv 28-44; (4) Vv 45-57.

2. 1st Irony: Our Lord Receives a Desperate Plea for Help and He Demonstrates his Love by Delaying his Help (vv 1-16).

- a) *Setting the Context* (vv 1-3).

b) *It is crucial to note how Jesus responds to the sisters' request (=see vv 4-6).*

c) *Lesson/Application.*

3. **2nd Irony: Our Lord Faces Devastating Loss and Gives Comfort and Solace by Focusing Attention On and Talking about Himself (vv 17-27).**

a) *This self-centered (=in the proper way) focus of Jesus is not uncommon in the gospels.*

i) See Matthew 11 – how Jesus sees himself vis-à-vis John the Baptist.

ii) John 11 is similar but in a different way – focus on grief/suffering – giving consolation. *How can Jesus do this?* Because of who he is. He can be 'self-centered' in the right way!! What we are to learn is that the only comfort/hope/confidence we can have – in this life and the life to come – will only be found in Him.

b) *Back to John 11.* Let's walk through the story verse by verse.

i) Vv 17-22.

ii) Vv 23-24.

iii) Vv 25-26: *"I am the Resurrection and the Life."*

What does this profound statement mean? At least 2 claims being made. It is best to see 'resurrection' and 'life' as complementary things.

a) *1st*: 'I am the Resurrection' = reference to *final resurrection of believers* on the last day. Jesus alone is the one who effects it (=see John 5:16-30). Where there is death, Jesus is the one who resurrects people – he has this authority! Death is not the final word. This is explained in v 25b – 'he who believes in me will live, even though he dies.'

b) *2nd*: 'I am the Life' = reference to *eternal life which we may have now*. See v 26a.

(1) 'Life' = life of the kingdom, eternal life tied to 'salvation.'

(2) Presupposes – John 3 – we have new life (=internal change), and this life is *now* ours. This is part of 'already-not yet tension.' See John 8:51; cf. 3:15-16; 5:24.

c) *Application Point.*

4. **3rd Irony: Our Lord Confronts Death Head-on thus Displaying his Sovereignty Over it but He Does so in Tears (Weeping) and Outrage (vv 28-44).**

a) *Context of these verses.... see vv 28-32.*

b) *What is Jesus' response? See vv 33-37.*

i) V 33. NIV = 'deeply moved in spirit and troubled.' But this is a very poor translation. Indeed, most of our English translations are poor at this point.

a) *Greek* – 'outraged (=angry) in spirit and troubled.'

(1) 'Outraged' = anger, emotional indignation.

(2) 'In spirit' = *not* Holy Spirit, but his own inward reaction.

b) Meaning? Jesus inwardly was furious/outraged/angry – *not* mere grief.

ii) *Why? Why is Jesus outraged? Why is he angry?* Also see v 38 where it is emphasized again! He is *not* outraged because he is powerless/frustrated in the face of death – see the later miracle, nor because he is forced to do a miracle, nor because he misses his friend since he will have him back in a moment. Rather, he is outraged at the reality of death and unbelief!

a) 'Death' = *not* part of the original creation, result of sin, rebellion – Rom 6:23.

b) 'Unbelief.' All around him misunderstanding, unbelief.

c) *Application Point.*

5. **4th Irony: Our Lord Confronts Moral and Spiritual Death Head-On and Ultimately Overcomes it by Dying Himself, thus Giving us Eternal Life (vv 45-57).**

a) *After such an incredible miracle, it is amazing to see the response of some (vv 45-48).*

b) *Caiaphus then addresses the Sanhedrin (see vv 49-50). 2 ironies here....*

i) *1st*: Jesus was executed for sake of the nation, but the nation was destroyed anyway.

ii) *2nd*: See vv 51-53. Caiaphus did *not* speak on his own; he spoke better than he knew – as a 'prophet.' God was speaking through him even though he did not realize the full implications of what he was saying. He intended it for evil; God intended it for good (=Gen 50:20). Both God and Caiaphus were thinking of a substitutionary death. But obviously in quite different ways.

c) *Application Point.*

6. **Concluding Reflections.**