



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 11:21-26, 38-44; 5:24-25, 28-29

? Jesus: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' (John 11:21-26)

- o 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died..."
- o 23 "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her.
- o 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."
- o 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:21, 22-26)

? Jesus calls: "Lazarus Come Out!" of the Tomb (John 11:38-44)

- o 38 Then Jesus...came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 "Remove the stone," Jesus said..."
- o 41 So they removed the stone... 43 After... this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"
- o 44 The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go." (John 11:38-39, 41, 43-44)

? Jesus: The Believer 'has Eternal Life' & 'Has passed from Death to Life' (John 5:24)

- o 24 "Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24)

? Jesus: "The coming [Resurrection] Hour is Now Here..." (John 5:25)

- o 25 "Truly I tell you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." (John 5:25)

? Jesus: "The [Resurrection] Time is coming..." (John 5:28-29)

- o 28 "Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice 29 and come out— those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28-29)

SUMMARY:

• Jesus' raising Lazarus is a profound 'sign,' pointing to deeper truths. Martha, a devout Jew, firmly believed in the bodily resurrection of the dead on the 'last day.' However, God's intervention through Christ dramatically shifted her perspective. Jesus proclaimed, 'I'm the Resurrection and the Life,' bringing God's promises from the distant future into our present reality. John's Gospel contrasts with the Old Testament and the other Gospels as Jesus extends to believers the offer of eternal life, resurrection, and exemption from divine judgment in the present through faith. He boldly asserts, 'the coming hour is now here!' This means God's eternal life isn't a far-off future event but the immediate possession of believers. Resurrection commences today through spiritual rebirth, and they've already transitioned from death to life, standing acquitted by divine judgment. This is what baptism testifies. Christians can confidently lay claim to God's eternal life, the initiation of a process guaranteeing future bodily resurrection, and exemption from God's final judgment. Let's wholeheartedly embrace these promises, dispelling anxiety about our current status and eternal state, thereby transforming our lives today.

? John's Gospel is "described as 'a book in which a child can paddle and an elephant may swim deep.'" — Richard Burridge

I. Jesus' Raising of Lazarus is a Sign –What's signified?

- Jesus had "called Lazarus out of the tomb & raised him from the dead... This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard [Jesus] had done this sign." (12:17-18) Note: raising Lazarus is specifically called "a sign" (12:17-18)
- "When Jesus calls Lazarus by name, he comes forth bound in burial clothes. This miracle is a preliminary fulfillment that the dead would respond to the Son's voice & come forth from their graves (5:25-29), confirming that Jesus has the power of life." [Robert P. Vande Kappelle, Truth Revealed, p. 153]
- "As a 'sign' the main point of the [raising of Lazarus] is not that Lazarus will never die. [He did in fact die again!]. His being raised from the dead sounds a far more weighty note: death itself is transcended by God's saving/redeeming action in Christ... Jesus declares climactically (11:25-26), 'I am the resurrection & the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, & everyone who lives & believes in me will never die.'" [Paul N. Anderson, "Navigating the Living Waters of the Gospel of John," George Fox University (2000) pp. 17-18]

II. Jesus: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' (John 11:21-26)

A. Jesus' challenges Martha's view

• "Martha displays belief in Jesus (11:21-22) & declares her confidence that [Lazarus] will be raised on the last day (11:24). While Jesus does not contradict her, he seeks to deepen her understanding. His declaration ['I'm the resurrection & the life'] (11:25) functions as a challenge to Martha who sees Jesus able to prevent death, but not reverse it within the current age. Jesus makes this challenge explicit, asking, 'do you believe this?' (11:26). It is a call to believe in the identity of Jesus as the resurrection & the life, but also to believe...[it's] implications for those who believe...Jesus' challenge to Martha does not undermine ...her initial response to Jesus..." [Chris Seglenieks, Johannine Belief..., p. 69]

1. A 'Remarkable Promise'

• "While Martha confessed belief in the end-time resurrection (11:24) Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise from the dead (11:23) & then proceeds to raise him that very day (11:43-44). Before he does so, however, he extends to her & to all who believe in him a remarkable promise. The promise is not... merely resurrection & life. He declares that 'he is' resurrection & life. Thus, faith in him, i.e., receiving him, is to receive the one who is resurrection & life. Therefore, the one who believes in him will have a life that carries him beyond death. It's the life of the age to come that he will receive now & have forever. Further, he will never die with regard to the age to come (11:25-26)." [W. Robert Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel," Criswell Theological Review, Vol. 3.1 (1988) p. 93]

2. Outstanding Question– ‘Do you believe this?’

B. Jesus is the Resurrection & the Life

- “Resurrection from the dead & genuine eternal life...are so closely tied to Jesus that they are embodied in [Jesus] & can be found only in relationship to him. Therefore ‘believes in [lit. ‘into’] me’ implies personal trust in Christ...genuine faith in Christ brings people into Christ, so they...become united with Christ.” [ESV Study Bible]
- “Jesus is the resurrection & the life; apart from him there is no resurrection & no life, & where he is, resurrection & life must be. Jesus is always the realization...of eternal life in the experience of Christians; in order that this truth may be manifested in a sign [Jesus] accomplishes the resurrection of Lazarus.” [C. K. Barrett, John, p. 396]
- Jesus’ “raising of Lazarus...points to the raising of all believers who follow the path open to them through death and resurrection. Believers find eternal life in the present, life that will carry them through in and beyond death (6:54) ... These are not really two separate stages –eternal life given now followed by a future resurrection of the dead. Rather, one flows from the other. Believers will be raised because of the life they already possess.” [Dorothy Lee, “Theodicy & Eschatology in John,” B. Barber (ed.) Theodicy & Eschatology, p. 57]

III. Jesus’ NT Revelation Versus Jewish OT concepts of “the Last Day” (11:24)

- Martha: “I know that [Lazarus] will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (11:24)
- Jesus proclaims, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives & believes in me will never die.’ (11:25-26).
- Jesus “links the [End-time] event with his own person & makes it clear that far from having to wait until some distant and undefined last day the real resurrection takes place in and through him ... The claims of Jesus ...are validated in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus has given physical life [to the dead Lazarus] as a sign of his power to give eternal life [now, presently] on this earth (realized eschatology) and as a promise that on the last day he will raise the dead (final eschatology).” [W. G. Fowler, M. Strickland, Influence of Ezekiel in the 4th Gospel, p. 99]

A. “Timing is Everything”

- “John portrays Jesus as the one who introduces the things reserved for the ‘last day’ into the now of history; he raises the dead [Lazarus] & pronounces judgment, actions expected from God at the very end of time... John expresses through narrative form ...a theological claim; that the end has arrived now, in the person of Jesus.” [Mark W. G. Stibbe, John’s Gospel, p. 67]

B. The OT: Resurrection Happens & Eternal Life Begins at the Last Day

- **Daniel 12:2-3:** This passage speaks of a future resurrection (“many who sleep...will awake”) to eternal life:
? “Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life [Greek: ????? ??????? (as in John 3:16)], and some to disgrace & eternal contempt. 3 Those who have insight will shine like the bright expanse of the heavens, & those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever & ever.” (Dan. 12:2-3 CSB)
- “According to the traditional Jewish conception, every man goes first to his death at the end of his earthly life. Then, some day, according to the Pharisees’ idea of the resurrection of the dead (or of the righteous), there will be judgment & eternal life for the righteous...The promise of ‘eternal life’ is found already in Dan. 12:2.” [Johannes Beutler, John, pp. 155-6]
- “The resurrection faith in the [OT] Prophets climaxes in Daniel 12:1-3, 13. Here the first complete statement of a resurrection of the just [i.e., righteous] and the unjust appears: Dan. 12:2...The OT stresses the presence of God in the daily affairs of life & tends thereby to ignore the larger issue of life after death. Nevertheless, it is not entirely silent...” [Craig A. Evans (ed.) “Resurrection,” Dictionary of NT Background, p.]

• “Beginning from Daniel 12:2, Judaism applied the phrase [‘Eternal life’] to the life of the coming age that would begin at the future resurrection; the Synoptics [Matt., Mark, Luke] usually apply the term in this standard Jewish sense. John, however, often speaks of eternal life as a present possession (e.g., Jn. 3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 20:31). Whereas the Synoptics tend to emphasize future eschatology...the 4th Gospel [John] emphasizes the present realization of eschatology. There is, of course, some future eschatology in John.” [Craig S. Keener, “John,” in J. B. Green (ed.) Dictionary of Jesus & the Gospels,” p. 127]

C. Resurrection: The Future (‘an hour is coming’) & the Present (‘is now here’) aspects

1. The Future is Now— “An hour is coming, and is now here” (4:23; 5:25)

- Jesus: “An hour is coming, & is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, & those who hear will live.” (5:25)
- To the Samaritan: “An hour is coming, & is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit & truth” (4:23-26)
- In John, “the Jewish notion of a final judgment that will take place at the end of time has less importance... There’s no need to wait till the end of time... John makes it clear that divine [sonship], eternal life, & union with the Father are available now to the one who believes in Jesus. The hour is coming, & now is... The believer enjoys favorable judgment, eternal life, & an intense belonging to God through faith & love of Jesus on this side of death.” [Francis J. Moloney, Johannine Studies, pp. 143-4]
- “For John, the phrase ‘the hour is coming, and is now here’ encapsulates the already-but-not-yet tension of... hope (Jn. 4:23; 5:25). The resurrection of Lazarus foreshadows Jesus’ own resurrection, both of which serve as signs that the new age of new creation & comprehensive redemption has leapt... from the future into the present...” [Andrew J. Byers, “Abide in Me,” in CCH. Cook (ed.) Biblical... Visions of Resilience, p.]

2. Illustrated by Raising Lazarus

- “Jn. 5:25 runs ‘The hour is coming & is now here.’ There may be a glance forward to the resurrection of Lazarus” — CK Barrett
- There’s “ambiguity...in Jesus’ promise that Lazarus ‘will rise again’ (11:23) ... Lazarus ‘will rise again’ literally both now in the presence of Mary & Martha and also at the last days, the end-time.” [James L. Resseguie, Strange Gospel, p. 49]
- ? ‘Now’ in the present: Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave at that time (11:43-44)
- ? Future: in the ‘Last day’: Jesus will raise Lazarus at the last day as Martha confessed (11:24)

IV. The Future is Now—Eternal Life (3:36)

- “The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life...” (3:36)
- “This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, & this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

A. Eternal life in John—more than an extension of present life

1. Synoptics: Eternal Life inherited in the ‘Age to Come’

- “The Synoptic Gospels... speak of eternal life; but here, as in Judaism, it is the life of the Age to Come... (Mk. 10:17). Eternal life is the life of the Kingdom of God (Mk. 10:23), which will be inherited in the Age to Come.” [GE. Ladd, Theology of NT, p. 292]
- “‘Eternal Life’ in the Synoptic Gospels... most often refers to future [End-time] blessings –i.e., the inheritance promised to the righteous in the ‘Age to Come’ of Jewish expectation.” [R. Longenecker, “Eternal Life,” DE. Gowan, Westminster TWB., p. 115]

2. John: Eternal Life begins now; its more than ‘everlasting (human) life’

- “Eternal life is the central theme...[in] John. The primary emphasis of John is upon eternal life as a

present experience –an emphasis quite lacking both in the Synoptic Gospels & in Judaism [OT].”
[George E. Ladd, *Theology of NT*, p. 290]

- “It is distinctive with John that eternal life (salvation) is more than something given as a reward in the future; instead it is seen as beginning when one believes in Jesus ... (8:31-36)... Eternal life is more than an extension of the present life [Think: ‘everlasting life’]; rather, it’s a new & different quality of life that is peculiar to God & becomes available to the believer as soon as he believes & immediately passes ‘from death to life’ in the Son.” [G. A. Turner, “Soteriology in... John,” *JETS*, p. 276]
- “What is future for the Synoptics is often present for John. [1.] Judgment (Mt. 25:31ff; Jn. 3:18-19), [2.] eternal life (Mk. 10:30; Jn. 5:24), ... [3.] sonship for the believer (Lk. 6:35; Jn. 1:12), the [4.] anticipated glory of Jesus (Mk. 13:26; Jn. 1:14 [etc.]) all fit this pattern. For John the future has swept into the present— ‘the hour is coming... & it is now.’” [Gary M. Burge, *Anointed Community* p. 115]

B. Eternal Life—the life of the Age to Come—granted now

- “This eternity-life, the life of the age to come, is granted to the believer [now,] within the sphere of this world, a mystery articulated by Jesus...to Martha (11:25b-26).” [Andrew J. Byers, “Abide in me,” in CCH. Cook, *Op. cit.*, p.]
- “The Gospel of John...emphasizes the present: Christian believers receive eternal life now, in the present” –Anthony Thiselton
- “Martha is aware of the resurrection on the last day, i.e., at the [End] of the age (11:24). Jesus then responds...: ‘I am the resurrection & the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives & believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ (11:25-26). The response... points Martha to the [eternal] life of the resurrection age available to Martha now through believing in Jesus (i.e., ‘Everyone who lives & believes in me will never die.’ 11:26) ... Until the final resurrection occurs, though, the question that Jesus poses to Martha presses upon all readers ... ‘Do you believe this?’... The time to believe these things about Jesus is now, prior to the final resurrection.” [Bret A. Rogers, *Jesus as the Pierced One*, pp. 176-7]

C. Eternal life is the believer’s present possession (5:24)

- “The Gospel of John...emphasizes the present: Christian believers receive eternal life now, in the present. This has been called ‘realized eschatology’.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *Life After Death*, p. 106]
- “In the 4th Gospel future [End-time events are] deemphasized & overshadowed by [Jesus’] claiming eternal life as the present possession of those who believe in Jesus. Anyone who believes ‘has eternal life & will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life’ (5:24, cf. 3:36).” [Richard B. Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture*, pp.]
- “The idea...that one participates in eternal life already in the present time is central to...[John’s] Gospel ...The person who believes already has eternal life (3:36) & ‘has passed from death to life’ (5:24). The one who does not believe ‘is already condemned’ (3:18). In comparison with this heavy emphasis on the present experience of eternal life...John’s references to a future resurrection & judgment are few & far between.” [ME. Stone, “Deliverance, Judgment...,” in *Early Judaism*, p. 152]
- John’s Gospel has “a distinct emphasis on the present possession of eternal life by believers. The ‘already but not yet’ tension in John... is distinctly central... the one who believes ‘has (present tense) eternal life’ (3:15; 5:24a) & also ‘will not be (future tense) judged (5:24b), because such persons have already ‘crossed over [perfect tense] from death to life’ (5:24c). A change of realms has taken place, & eternal life is a present possession. This is restated in 6:54 [‘The one who eats my flesh & drinks my blood has eternal life, & I’ll raise him up on the last day’] where those who fully encounter Jesus immediately ‘have eternal life’ & Jesus will ‘raise them up at the last day’.” [Grant R. Osborne, “Eternal Life,” in JB. Green (ed.) *Dict. of*

Jesus & Gospels, p. 521]

D. Believers 'have passed' out of Death into Life (5:24)

• “Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word & believes him who sent me has eternal life & will not come under judgment but

has passed [Greek: *Metabaino*, perfect tense] from death to life.” (Jn. 5:24)

1. “Has Passed”—Perfect tense

• “What’s the significance of the perfect tense of the verb [Gk. *Metabaino*]? The perfect tense serves to emphasize the enduring & present result of a situation—in this case, movement from one place or situation, ‘death,’ to another, ‘life.’... John 5:24... states that the one who believes Jesus & his message ‘has crossed over (*metabaino*) from death to life.’ Passing from death into life is equivalent to...crossing from darkness to light (Jn. 3:19-21 [etc.]). Thus, the perfect tense here indicates a completed past action that ushers in a new state of existence. People who believe in Jesus... his life & message, have moved from hatred and death to the realm of love & light.” [Herbert W. Bateman, *Workbook for Intermediate Greek: 1-3 John*, p. 373]

• “The perfect tense—one who has passed & remains in the state of having passed from death to life – [which] emphasizes eternal

life as a present reality...” [Chad Brand (ed.) *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 512]

2. By Rebirth, believers have ‘crossed over’ (3:3, 7; 5:24)

• “‘Crossing from death to life [5:24] ...refers to a transformative event where the believer undergoes a spiritual change... This transformative experience is described as being ‘born from above’ or ‘born again’...a spiritual rebirth ...that enables individuals to transcend their earthly existence... Through this rebirth, believers ...have crossed from death into life, experiencing a profound shift in their relationship with God & their understanding of reality.” [GC. Evans, *Holy Spirit...for the Living*, p. 41]

• “Faith in Jesus is tied to regeneration: ‘To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born...of God’ (John 1:12–13) ... The concept of new birth is thoroughly eschatological (cf. Ezek. 36:25–27). Regeneration as spiritual resurrection by the Spirit is the commencement of eternal life and the entrance to the ‘kingdom of God’ (Jn. 3:3). The life of the age to come has broken in from the future in the person of Jesus. The resurrection has been inaugurated.” [Abjan van Meerten, “Eternal Life & Eschatology in John,” Feb. 21, 2021]

3. God can change people’s current state ‘from death to life’

• “According to 3:36 people abide under God’s wrath already. 5:24 calls the desperate predicament ‘death,’ & 5:29 shows that abiding in death (under wrath) will eventually result in...final judgment at the resurrection... One’s current state determines their final state. 5:25 offers hope to people abiding in death beneath God’s wrath. God can change their current state ‘from death to life’ before the last day of judgment arrives. People must listen to the Son of Man’s voice & believe ... [Thus] people pass from death to life ...changing their current state ...to having eternal life with God’s Son.” [Bret Rogers, *Op. cit.*, pp. 175-6]

4. From Death to Life—a “spiritual resurrection”

• “Jesus [declares], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word & believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life’ (5:24) ... The emphasis here is clearly on ...[what’s] already true of the believer. He already has eternal life. He has already passed from death to life. In other words, he has already been spiritually resurrected.” [David L. Turner, “...Future in John’s Writings,” in D. J. Bingham (ed.) *Eschatology*, p. 221]

• “In John’s Gospel, the ‘now’ stresses the current... work of salvation ...that transforms death into life... (5:25) The ‘now’ means that the resurrection awaited in [the End-] times is already beginning. It is the spiritual resurrection which is the authentic liberation from death.” [Jean Galot, *Jesus, Our Liberator*, pp. 42-43]

5. Future resurrection is ‘a ratification’ of present eternal (resurrection) life

• The “believers who already experience eternal life...must rise on the [future] last day...Their new resurrection-life existence will be a ratification & confirmation of life & freedom from condemnation they already enjoy.” [D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 28]

D. Eternal Life & Eternal Security (6:54)

- “The one who eats my flesh & drinks my blood has eternal life, & I will raise him up on the last day” (6:54)
- Those “who believe already have eternal life. That eternal life continues after death through the believer’s future resurrection from the dead.” [Troels Engberg-Pedersen, John & Philosophy, p. #24]
- “Jesus says, I’ll ‘lose none of all that he has given me.’ The eternal security of true believers is not dependent on their own feeble hold on Jesus... They are safe because [1.] it’s the Father’s will that Jesus lose not a single one of them... [2.] The Father’s will is that the Son will ‘raise...up at the last day’ all those given him. Not only are true believers kept secure during the difficult passage through life, but they are also assured that at the end they will be raised to enjoy the eternal presence of the triune God... [John’s] ‘realized eschatology’ ...doesn’t rule out an eschatology yet to be fulfilled.” [David Garland, John, p. #39]

V. The Future is Now—Resurrection (5:25)

- “An hour is coming, & is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, & those who hear will live.” (5:25)
- “‘The hour is coming & is now here,’ there may be a glance forward to the resurrection of Lazarus in Jn. 11.”— CK Barrett

A. Lazarus—An ‘Acted Parable of Christian Conversion’

- “There’s more to Jesus’ meaning than a literal transition from death to life. A figurative rising is meant also ...Lazarus’ rising [is] an acted parable of Christian conversion: ‘The pattern of the life of all Christians is determined by the movement from death to life experienced by Lazarus. Christians have already risen with Christ (Rom. 6:4f; Col. 2:12; 3:1). This movement to be completed only at the last day, has already taken place with regard to sin; the resurrection of Lazarus therefore is an acted parable of Christian conversion & life.’” [C. K. Barrett, John, p. 395]

B. You are ‘Lazarus’!

- “Lazarus is us, bound by death in our current lives, called to life by Jesus who is the Light & the Life...Jesus stands at...our tomb, shouting “Come out!” We are to substitute our own name for...‘Lazarus,’ hear his command, & walk into the light of day, pulling [off] our grave clothes as we go.” — Alyce M. McKenzie, “Lazarus Is Us: Reflections on Jn. 11,” Patheos, April 3, 2011]
- “Like Lazarus, God has called every blood-bought believer back to life from the dead. He’s done this by raising us by the power of His Spirit & calling us forth by the voice...of His Son Jesus Christ. This calling forth guarantees new life...” [Bradley C. Johnson, Removing the Graveclothes, p.]
- “The raising of Lazarus in John 11 ...point[s] beyond the mere resuscitation to mortal life... and functions as [a] sign of resurrection to eternal life, effected by God for the convert... In John 11...the emphasis...[is] on eternal life as [a] Christian experience in the present... with a theological understanding of conversion as resurrection from the state of death.” [Richard Bauckham, “Imaginative Literature,” in Philip F. Esler (ed.) Early Christian World, Vol. 2, p. 97]
- “The real resurrection takes place...at a time when the general expectation does not [expect] it... i.e., in the here & now, and it consists of... belief in the Son of God, who possesses the power to raise spiritually from the dead.” [E. Haenchen, John, 2:62-3]

C. Christians have risen with Christ

- “Christians have already risen with Christ (Rom. 6:4f; Col. 2:12; 3:1). This movement to be completed only at the last day, has already taken place with regard to sin... [So,] the anticipation of the [End-time] resurrection is already in some sense present now in the believer. Where Jesus is the resurrected life is also, & thus he says, ‘I am the resurrection & the life’ (11:25) ...’The powerful cry with which Jesus calls Lazarus out of the grave (11:43) is only an external echo of the call with which [Jesus,] God’s messenger, calls all men who believe in him to God’s life (cf. 5:24-25).” [James L.

Resseguie, Op. cit., p. 49]

D. Baptism testifies to this (Rom. 6:3-5)

VI. The Future in Now—Judgment (3:18; 5:24)

- “The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed

in the name of the only Son of God.” (3:18)

- “Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word & believes him who sent me has eternal life & will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.” (5:24)

- In John “future realities become available here & now. Although the author retains the traditional future hopes, he reminds his readers that eternal life, resurrection, judgment, & the Parousia can be experienced as present realities (3:17-19, 36; 5:24; 11:25-26; 12:31).” [C. B. Puskas, D. Crump, Introduction to the Gospels & Acts, p. 172]

- “In the light of [Jesus’] bold claim, there’s no need to look forward wistfully to the ‘resurrection on the last day’ (11:24). In

Jesus, the resurrection has engulfed the sphere of the present... & the future fades into relative insignificance, as does the reality of physical death... The corollary ... is that, in a real sense, judgment has already taken place whenever anyone hears the gospel & responds either in faith or in unbelief (3:18). Nowhere in John do we hear of a final judgment that will hold any suspense or surprises.

Jesus’ entry into the world polarizes humanity into believers & unbelievers, & their eternal destiny is already settled by that polarization...” [Richard B. Hays, Op. cit., pp.]

- “Those who believe have already passed through the critical moment [of judgment] & entered into eternal life: ‘Anyone who hears my word & believes him who sent me has eternal life & will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life’ (5:24). For the believers... eternal life is now... Judgment is not a future event ‘out there’ at the end of time... That’s why Jesus can respond to Martha ... [11:25-26]... The person who knows Jesus as the sent one... already possesses [End-time] life

... Therefore, mere physical death becomes a trivial matter. Jesus ... raising Lazarus (11:38-44) [is] an outward and visible sign of the spiritual truth that Jesus is more powerful than death, that death cannot snatch from his hand those whom he loved.” [Richard B. Hays, Moral Vision of NT, p. 150]

- “John declares... ‘He who believes in [God’s Son] is not judged [present passive],’ whereas the one who does not believe has been ‘judged already’ [perfect passive] (3:18). The Greek present & perfect tenses point to a verdict in the here & now, be it positive or negative. Similarly, Jesus claims that the person who receives his word ‘has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life’ (5:24). A person whom God has raised to life [spiritually] enjoys God’s positive verdict; such a person need fear neither condemnation nor death.” [Paul A. Rainbow, Johannine Theology, p. 275]

- “The believer... [is] already acquitted [in judgment]. Nor is it necessary for the believer to wait until the last day to experience something of resurrection life; the believer has eternal life & has crossed over from death to life. (This is the strongest affirmation of inaugurated eschatology in the 4th Gospel).” [D. A. Carson, John, p. 256]

- In “3:18 & 5:24... Jesus can be said to be bringing instant eternal life with an exemption from judgment for believers & instant judgment to unbelievers. This... brings the [End-time] judgment process forward into the present... John is proposing a realized eschatology which offers believers eternal life & exemption from judgment.” [Alan C. Blackwood, Theology of Judgment in the 4th Gospel, U. of Glasgow (2005) pp. 99-100]”

- “Salvation is present to believers through faith in Christ, so judgment is effected in the present as well (3:16-21; 36) ... The present manifestations of salvation & judgment is... ‘realized eschatology.’ ... The NT... stresses the present reality of salvation... but ... in John the ‘realized’ aspects of salvation receive greater emphasis.” [MM. Thompson, “John,” J. Green, Op. cit., p. 381]

• “John 5 presents a...theology of judgment which is bicameral [having ‘2-tracks’] ...one for Christian believers & one for the rest of humanity... Christian believers have been exempted from any end-time judgment process, ...[They] have already obtained... eternal life which they...continue to enjoy... following bodily death ... [Meanwhile, there’s] a judgment tribunal for the rest of humanity at the [‘last day’] where Christ, as God’s appointed judge, will sit in judgment.” [Alan C. Blackwood, Op. cit., p. v.]

• “Will... Church Age believers be judged at the Great White throne judgment [Rev. 20:11]? No. The Lord has promised that we ‘shall not come into judgment’ regarding everlasting life (5:24).” [Bob Wilkin, “Response,” J. of Grace Evan. Soc. (2018) p. 24]

• **NOTE:** This last quote may raise questions, like “I thought the Bible says somewhere that we will be judged?” Or “What about the ‘Judgment Seat of Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:10)?” We didn’t address these questions in the message or the materials (so far). The APPENDIX following (from GotQuestions.org) begins to address these types of issues.

• **QUESTIONS:**

1. Jesus’ raising of Lazarus is specifically called a ‘sign’ — Jesus ‘had done this sign.’ (12:17-18). As a sign, this miracle points beyond itself to something greater. What are the significant items to which Lazarus’ raising points? Discuss.

2. In both the OT (Daniel 12:2) & the Synoptics (Matt., Mark, Luke), ‘Eternal life’ is presented as the life of the coming age that begins at the future resurrection. But, in John’s Gospel Jesus promises ‘eternal life’ in the immediate present – ‘now’ — to those who believe.

a. Where in John’s Gospel do we see such specific promises?

b. What is the significance of this particular emphasis of John’s Gospel? What does it mean for you? Discuss.

3. “Jn. 3:18 says ‘Those who believe in the Son are not judged,’ so, believers are exempt from the final judgment.” — Discuss

4. In Jn. 5:24 Jesus makes promises to anyone who “hears my word & believes him who sent me (God the Father).”

a. What items (plural) does Jesus’ promise to those who fulfill this condition (“hears & believes”)?

b. What do each of these items mean?

c. Are the items Jesus promises available in the present, or only in the distant future (the ‘last day’)? Discuss.

5. In Jn. 11:38-44 Jesus commands Lazarus to ‘Come Out!’ of the tomb (grave). Previously, Jesus made declarations about people hearing his voice & responding. (Read Jn. 5:24-25, 28-29)

a. In John 5:25, 28-29 where are there ‘echoes’ of the raising of Lazarus?

b. In each case: (i.) what are the echoes of Lazarus’ raising? (ii.) What are the (predicted) responses to Jesus’ voice?

6. In Jn. 5:25 Jesus uses the phrase “an hour is coming, & is now here.” In 5:28 the phrase used is “a time is coming.”

a. Is this difference significant? If so, what does the difference imply?

b. Compare 5:25 with 5:28-29; does one statement refer to the more distant future & the other (more) to the present?

c. If so, what are those indications (hints)? Which statement refers more to the distant future & which more to the present?

d. Does this suggest that one is a literal (bodily) resurrection & the other a present (spiritual?) resurrection? Which? Discuss

APPENDIX: “What is the ‘Judgment Seat of Christ’?” [Reproduced from GotQuestions.org]

“The judgment seat of Christ involves a time in the future when believers will give an account of themselves to Christ. This is the plain teaching of Scripture: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body,

whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). The warning is to Christians, not unbelievers. [Paul is writing to the Christian-believers in Corinth, so “all” denotes “all Christians”] As Jesus taught in His parable, the king is going to return, at which time he will require an account from his servants (Luke 19:11–26).

The judgment seat of Christ is different from the Great White Throne Judgment. That will be the final judgment of the wicked prior to their being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). Appearing before the Great White Throne will be unbelievers.

Believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. [They are two different events]

The judgment seat of Christ does not determine our salvation; that matter was settled by Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf (1

John 2:2) and our faith in Him (John 3:16). All our sins are forgiven, and there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life

and will not be judged [regarding their salvation/eternal destiny] but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

So, believers are secure in Christ, but they still must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It will be a time of examination and a time of reward. Jesus will inspect our works. What did we do with the resources God gave us? How faithful were we?

Were we yielded to the Spirit, seeking to honor Christ and further His work in the world? If so, we will have reward (see Matt. 10:41–42). Did we neglect our opportunities to serve the Lord? If so, we will suffer loss of reward. Paul likens our Christian service to erecting a building:

“Each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames,” (1 Cor. 3:10b–15).

Note, in the above passage, that our works subsequent to Christ’s salvation are of two different types—good and bad. The “fire” of God’s scrutiny will reveal the quality of our works. As Arthur Pink points out, “‘Gold, silver, precious stones’ are of intrinsic value, whereas ‘wood, hay, stubble’ are a natural growth” (Redeemer’s Return, ch. 8, pt. 5). Rewards are distributed to those whose works withstand the test. Those whose works have a natural source will “suffer loss.” Their works will be burned up, but they themselves “will be saved.” The judgment seat of Christ, then, does not confer or rescind salvation

The judgment seat of Christ is also not a time to punish sin. Jesus took our punishment once and for all. The judgment seat of Christ is a time when we will be called on to report, to render an accounting of what we did for Jesus. It will be a serious and

necessary time of reckoning, but, as God’s redeemed, we will never be condemned with the wicked. As one theologian put it, “It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the judgment is unrelated to the problem of sin, that it is more for the bestowing of rewards than the rejection of failure” (LS. Chafer, Systematic Theology, V. IV: Ecclesiology-Eschatology, Press, 1948, p. 406).

In the Greek, a single word is used for “judgment seat” in Rom. 14:10 & 2 Cor. 5:10—the word is bema. A bema was a raised platform on which judges sat to view athletic games. Their job was to make sure contestants followed the rules and to present awards to the victors (see 1 Cor. 9:24–27).

The bema was never a place to reprimand the athletes or to punish them in any way. It was a place of testing & reward. In the same way, the bema of Christ will not be a place of condemnation or censure. In anticipation of the judgment seat of Christ, we are careful in what we say and do in this life. James gives this advice: “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom” (James 2:12; cf. Matt. 12:36). We want to give our account with joy on that day, and that is why we

strive to serve the Lord faithfully today.

The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for different things. The various crowns are described in 2 Tim. 2:5, 2 Tim. 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4, and Rev. 2:10. We believe the judgment seat of Christ is when the crowns will be awarded, and this will take place in heaven soon after the rapture of the church (as described in 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

At the very end of the Bible, Jesus said, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person

according to what they have done” (Rev. 22:12). In preparation for the judgment seat of Christ, what are you choosing to “build” with? Gold, silver, & precious stones—things that will last? Or wood, hay, and straw—things that will not stand the day of testing? *[Reproduced from: What is the judgment seat of Christ? | GotQuestions.org]*