

**Theology**

**Titles of Christ**

**“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”**

(Jn 11:25)

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**T**HANK GOD! For with these words which were spoken by Jesus Christ the Son of God, death and the times of crying over the dead have come to an end among the children of God. These words themselves have set an end to the definition of disasters, misfortunes and sorrows in the world of God’s children, because the spirit of resurrection surpassed them with eternal life following. These words were said by Jesus before He offered himself up to judgment, the cross and death. This renders Christ’s resurrection on the third day no more a new event to him, because with these words resurrection becomes his nature and eternal life his life. Christ told this statement to Martha when she said to him about Lazarus her dead brother, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (Jn 11:24). This she said in answer to Christ’s words, “Your brother will rise again” (Jn 11:23). Jesus was affected and said that he was the resurrection and the life. Christ proclaims here his power in transcending time; for “the last day” is the same as the present day, because time surrenders and does not exist to him whose nature is eternal. Christ took that which is God’s concerning the resurrection from the dead at the last day and entered the world with it to implement it for the Father. He who believes in him will surely see the resurrection and the life. This was the best expression of the power of his divinity in front of which death, in all its forms and circumstances, cannot withstand. We, therefore, find that Christ himself explains his words that he is the resurrection and the life thus: “He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25, 26). Which means that death does not exist for him who lives with Christ. How can a person who clings to the resurrection die? He will surely live and surpass death as if he had not died, because he carries his resurrection within him. In the same way, if a man has gained eternal life, how can one say that he died? The words in the prayers of the Church for the dead are true: “It is not death, but a passage for your servants.” Yes, a passage it is from a temporary, superficial life to a true eternal one across the return of dust to dust. At the present, the earthly flesh obstructs light and

eternal life from our spiritual eyes. As soon as we get rid of the flesh and consign it to the dust, we will see light and life.

Christ corrected Martha's concept on the resurrection. She had learnt from the Rabbis and Pharisees that there is a resurrection of the flesh at the last day. But by the coming of Christ to the world bearing the resurrection and eternal life, the resurrection is now present and eternal life has its doors wide open to those who believe in Christ and accept the spirit of resurrection. It is the reason for which he said: "I am the resurrection and the life" as a salvational fact, and not merely as creedal words, which exists at the present to remove from the Christian the fear of death and the grief and pain at the loss of family members and friends. For with the entry of the resurrection through faith into the world of believers in Christ, death ceased to exist. The sorrow and cries over the dead became laughter among their spirits in heaven and ignorance, for which believers will be held accountable. As the Bible says: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O Sheol, where is thy victory?" ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54-57).

In Christ's words, "I am the resurrection and the life," the fact of Christ's divinity is proclaimed. For it is well known in the faith that it is God who will resurrect the flesh and give it life. Christ's words here that he is "the resurrection and the life" means that he from now resurrects and gives life like God, which was considered to be God's prerogative at the end of times. Thus Christ proclaims here his transcendence over time by introducing the resurrection and the element of eternal life as a pledge affecting from now on the essence of the life of believers without waiting till the end of times.

The Apostle Paul comments on this fact saying: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1 AV). That is to say that those who are in Christ transcend the expected day of judgment: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 Jn 3:14); "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). It is clear that these are firmly established facts of faith as we have undergone death with Christ and have been resurrected with him. We, therefore, are no longer under sin or condemnation but live with Christ and the Father in the fellowship of eternal life, which we gained through the redemption and salvation that have been fulfilled:

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:1-4).

Consequently, our interest and solace has become in the above, which means that we have penetrated death and transcended the present life through faith. We are risen with him and are seated with him in heaven. Christ made it clear when he said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (Jn 5:24).

With these words, Christ does not cancel the forthcoming resurrection nor future judgment but proclaims that he descended from heaven to begin it here and now. Because he who came to forgive sins definitely removes condemnation. He who came to abolish death had inevitably to give the resurrection and life immediately and from now on.

In order to confirm to whomever believes in the last day that he who gives the spirit of resurrection here is he himself who will resurrect them from the dead at the last day, Christ said straightforwardly and indubitably:

“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:39, 40).

Therefore, we are now before a divine plan of great love, mercy and justice—all together. In order that we may not be taken by surprise on the last day of judgment when no one will be saved and every mouth will be stopped—judgment being according to everyone’s works—God took the initiative and sent His only Son bearing resurrection and eternal life within his very being. He offered him to bear judgment instead of mankind and to fulfill the punishment of death within ourselves and raise us from eternal death by his resurrection and quicken us with his life. We would thus have undergone judgment before [the day of] judgment and have been freed from eternal damnation and received eternal life as a pledge from now. The Apostle Paul saw it and hailed it with love: “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh (still), but after the Spirit (inevitably)” (Rom 8:1 AV). Thus, we realize for sure that when Christ says: “I am the resurrection and the life,” he proclaims to every one who believes in him that he has traversed the last day and passed through judgment earning innocence and justification by the salvation fulfilled by Christ. How glorious God is!

It is a unique opportunity to be saved from eternal damnation and to enter the era of grace freely instead of wrath and punishment: “the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (Jn 3:35, 36).

After he said to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life,” he raised Lazarus, her brother, who had rot in the grave, as he had been dead for four days. He said to him,

“Lazarus, come out” and the dead man came out alive. The resurrection Christ effected was a sort of new creation as the body had decomposed and was infested by worms. Creation from dust or from nothing is even easier than restoring a mangled and fetid body back to life. Because in this instance, the creation annuls all the aspects of decay the minute it regains life. With this allusion, Christ proclaims the power he has given to the resurrection to annul all the sinful acts which ruined the life of man, thus expressing the complete removal of condemnation. How glorious God is!

Christ offered the resurrection of Lazarus as a living and visible model of what he exactly performs on the invisible plane. For when we received the spirit of resurrection and life, all the features of corruption secretly fell from us and the surrounding works of sin dissolved and disintegrated without being felt either by us or by others. Thereupon condemnation also disappeared never to be seen again. And just as they unbound Lazarus from the bandages of death and released him from his shroud, so has the resurrection of Christ released us. And as Christ ordered “... let him go” we too, in the same manner, became free to move even to the highest heaven. How glorious God is!

“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin (i.e. surpass it) and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11).

Maybe the greatest expression on the indwelling of the spirit of resurrection into man’s very heart is Christ’s words: “So he who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). This happened when we entered into fellowship with Christ in his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day. Consequently, through faith, we became with Christ and in him. But when we ate of his flesh and drank of his blood, it was as if we had really eaten resurrection and drunk life.

Therefore the words “I am the resurrection and the life” does not in any way concern Christ but deeply concern us. Christ offered it to us as a divine act that penetrated our souls and raised us from the death of sin to live to God.

But there exists a fundamental condition to Christ’s words, which was the only question he asked Martha before raising her brother from the dead. It was also the same question he inevitably asked before offering us his resurrection and a share in his life: “Do you believe this?” The exemplary answer, on which basis Lazarus was raised and we will be raised, was: “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (Jn 11:26, 27).

We say again that when Christ says, “Do you believe?” he does not require more than believing his words. If we believe his words, then we will immediately receive all he has promised. Believing God is a matter of the heart that is inflamed by love, joy and hope: “Did I not tell you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40). Faith, therefore, is a window we can open with the belief of our hearts to see

God's glory and all the works he has done.

In a previous chapter, Christ uncovers the mystery of Lazarus' resurrection and at the same time uncovers the mystery of our resurrection if we desire it to happen: "Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25).

For sure, the voice of the Son of God penetrates the ears even though they be decomposed and eaten by worms and turned to dust; for it is a voice to which death succumbs, and [consequently] everyone who is under the power of death. Lazarus heard Christ's cry from the depth of the abyss and immediately put on the flesh and rose. This is one of the most wonderful examples of Christ's works in those who believe in him and now love him: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn 5:24).

Here, the ability to obtain Christ's promise for receiving eternal life crystallizes. It depends on the fitness of the ear to hear Christ's voice and words: "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word" (Jn 8:43).

The qualification enabling one to hear Christ is actually an awareness or an enlightened consciousness. The inception of an enlightened consciousness is based on one's inner decision to be devoted to the word of God. To a person who has devoted all his understanding and interest to discipleship to the word of the Gospel, the mystery of Christ's words is deciphered and the Holy Spirit comes to complete the mind's enlightenment in understanding that which is written or heard.

The Scribes and Pharisees took Christ's words lightly while paying great attention to hunt for mistakes in his words or accusing him of departing from the law or tradition. They were thus totally unable to listen to him gratifyingly or adequately and, therefore, could understand none of his words.

As for him who follows the words of Christ with a readiness to listen in faith to all his sayings, Christ promises him "... eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn 5:24). We are positive we can explain it to the reader in a few words: he who is faithful to Christ, with the devotion of love, making the Bible his most cherished book, will gain a personal closeness to Christ which will end by a constant feeling of God's presence. Accepting the resurrection is living [perpetually] in such a state. It is the pledge of eternal life. It is the removal of the yoke of judgment from one's neck without a price. How glorious God is!

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**(To be continued)**