

**FAITH AND HOPE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.  
A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN  
11:17-44 IN LIGHT OF “REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY”**

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*Abstract*

*This paper offers a biblical-theological analysis of John 11:17-44, with particular attention to the themes of faith and hope. Through a close reading of Jesus' dialogues with Martha and Mary, it explores the distinctive Johannine perspective on faith and eschatology. In the Fourth Gospel, faith in Jesus is not merely a future-oriented hope, but a present participation in divine life. This theological vision reflects what biblical scholars have identified as John's "realized eschatology"—a perspective in which eternal life is not solely a future promise but a present reality for those who believe in the risen Christ. The paper argues that, for John, to believe in Jesus now is to already enter into the space of God. In light of the Jubilee Year 2025, which the Catholic Church celebrates as a time of renewed faith and hope, this study highlights the contemporary relevance of John's eschatological vision. By analyzing the narrative of the raising of Lazarus, particularly through Jesus' encounters with Martha and Mary, the paper seeks to offer a deeper understanding of how the Gospel of John connects present faith with the reality of eternal life.*

*Keywords: faith, hope, Gospel of John, Martha, Mary, Lazarus, Jubilee, realized eschatology*

INTRODUCTION

Thinking about the last things or the eschatology was always deeply complexed. The problem which seems to be the most complicated when dealing with the issue of the eschatology is that no one can know the time when the End comes, and the new era will consequently begin. To say it differently, the most delicate issue to the one occupied with the investigation of the eschatology is the

problem of *how* and *when* the last things will appear to be the reality of believers.

The Hebrew bible itself when facing that problem had always thought about the time which is coming or the future time that the God's people has to attend. There is not only one prophet who was constantly repeating more or less the similar words: *The Days of the Lord are coming* (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Is 2). That firm and thoroughly clear Jewish view of seeing the Days of the Lord as the days that come is present likewise in the canonical Gospels.

Reading the Gospels an even not so attentive reader will notice that to talk about eschatology or the unity with God has to come in the future (cf. Lk 20, 27-39). Since the faithful on the earth are facing many struggles, they have to hope the one day of liberation. The final and complete unity with their God it is thus something possible only in the future not yet to come. However, the Gospel of John seems to shake that point of view on the eschatology. John's account is different in the fact that John is announcing the unity with God not as something yet to come, but the reality already now possible to grasp to those who believe in the Risen Lord.

To show that not entirely, but significantly different lenses to look at the eschatology and the union with God and the Life he offers, we will in our paper try to analyze chosen passage from the John's Gospel in order to show his fresh look at the last things. The passage we choose is the one from the eleventh chapter of the Fourth Gospel which put in the scene Jesus and his close friends: Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Namely, our biblical-theological analysis will take in account the text in John 11: 17-44 and the dialogues on the scene between Jesus, Martha and Mary. The dialogues among friends, or the dialogizing between Jesus and Martha and his sister Mary will shed some light on the John's new perspective on the eschatology. It seems that the John's point of view appears to be different and at the same time reconcile the two very often confronting views on eschatology: the one which is future and the other which is already realized with the person of Jesus Christ and offered to those who believe.

Therefore, our study will first delineate the two different perspectives of eschatology and then the second one or the so-called "realized" will be assessed more deeply. All for the purpose of offering of a decent theological message of John 11: 17-44 for today's readers who celebrate the Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church which is oriented around the deeper encounter with the person of Jesus in the act of faith and hope.

## 1. THE SPECIFICITY OF ESCHATOLOGY

Among the biblical scholars from all over the world it is observable a notable interest in the eschatology presented in the Gospels. There are many reasons for that. It seems that the most influential reason is that the people are deeply affected with the events in the worlds which suggest to them that the end is near. In other words, the literature which proclaim the end of the world or the last mounting every day more. At the same time, one must admit that the reality related to death and the afterlife is an object of faith. Nevertheless, the life (*zoe*) that Jesus speaks of is different from the biological life (*bios*) that every human being lives.

The study of the Gospel of John and the proper practicing of the biblical-theological analysis should bring together perhaps sometimes very conflicting positions and facilitate the understanding of these important realities. Without going into the question of the direct redaction of individual books, it is necessary to emphasize the reference to the authority of John the Apostle, a witness to the words and deeds of Jesus.

The theological term eschatology is ambiguous. The term *eschata* should be understood as the *last (things)*. The second part is the term *logia* which is translated as doctrine, science, narration. Therefore, eschatology literally means the doctrine of the last things, of the last times, of death, of judgment, and of life after death, of the end of the world, of the transformation of heaven and earth, of the second coming of Christ, and of the new creation and resurrection of the dead.

Although the concepts of eschatology are considered differently in the Old and the New Testament, it is still about faith and hope in the future that is rooted in history<sup>1</sup>. The use of the word eschatology in the context of the Old Testament is different from that in the New Testament because it expresses everything new that Christ does. The prophets announce future things that the Jews did not yet understand as the last. God creates everything new: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered or come to mind" (Is 65:17). This is the announcement of the last and the first, and at the same time the new; the old and the new.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Adalbert Rebić, Biblijska eshatologija, *Bogoslovska smotra*, 73 (2003.) 1, 71-100 here 100, available: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/43886> 5.5.2025.

The Book of Revelation which is by some biblical scholars seen as the part of John's school of thoughts sees the fulfillment of the promise of future goods: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there is no more sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new!" And He added, "Write: These words are faithful and true." (Rev 21:1-2,5). Some researchers of biblical eschatology understand it as an experience lived in the present time and hope for God's future final intervention in the history of humanity and the world.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. Eschatology of John's Gospel

It is worth at the beginning of our analysis to say few words about the specificity of John's eschatology. The eschatology of John is fulfilled by the presence of Jesus, who demands a decision "for" Jesus and faith "in" Jesus from the characters in the narrative. This demand is also addressed to the readers (John 20:30-31). A positive response to this invitation results in the present appropriation and enjoyment of the eschatological gift of eternal life, although a tension between "already" and "not yet" can be sensed. Since the author clearly identifies Jesus with the Christian conception of the Messiah of Jewish expectation (John 20:31), the title functions as a key to understanding the realized eschatology of John. While the Greek text of John contains eschatological statements that refer to both the present and the future, the phenomenon of "realized eschatology" is clearly dominant. Since realized eschatology refers to the realization in the present experience of blessings, which are usually considered part of the eschatological future, the author and the community he represents have transformed traditional Christian eschatology.

John's community experienced the benefits of future eschatological salvation as a present reality in four ways. (1) Since the Spirit of God is understood as an eschatological gift, the presence of the Spirit-Comforter means that the *eschaton* is present. (2) The "(eternal) life" is understood usually as the future blessing of eschatological salvation. John's emphasis on the present possession of this life represents a radical modification of that traditional Christian eschatology. The key phrase in John is "to have/possess (eternal)

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 72.

life” (John 3:15, 36; 5:24, 40; 6:40, 47, 53, 68; 10:10; 1 John 3:13, 15; 5:12; 13, 16). (3) Since judgment is an event usually associated with eschatological consummation, the belief that divine judgment occurs in the present suggests that another important eschatological feature is considered part of present experience (3:36). (4) Since the Parousia or “coming” of Jesus as the Son of Man to save and judge is one of the central features of eschatological consummation for traditional Christianity, references to the present “coming” of Jesus must be understood as accomplished eschatology.<sup>3</sup>

The realization of eschatology occurs through faith in Jesus Christ, which influences the formation of Jesus’ disciples as friends: “You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; I have called you friends, because I have made known to you all that I have heard from my Father” (John 15:14-15). However, faith in future goods is also linked to hope, which is active in Jesus’ disciples. They believe in Jesus and hope in his words. According to Joachim Gnilka, Jesus’ communion with his disciples gains a stronger emphasis on mutual trust and friendship, although this friendship is under special conditions, which again indicate a special type of friendship (11:11). Jesus draws closer to the disciple and friend in faith. The relationship of friends (disciples) to Jesus is determined by faith. In doing so, it can be seen that faith in action is usually meant. Faith in John is also described in images from everyday life, such as coming to a house, making friends, because according to Schlatter, faith is a goal that transcends everything else.<sup>4</sup> This faith accepts Jesus’ mission and mission in the world, representing the exegetical view of John’s eschatology, suggests not discussing what is not in the fourth gospel:

“My perspective will justify me in not delving into natural eschatology, the eschatology of philosophers, into questions about the last judgment after death, about purgatory, about hell, limbo, into descriptions of the horrors of the end of the world. What is not in John’s writings, I will not even address, except indirectly.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. David Aune, *Eschatology: Early Christian Eschatology*, in: *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 2, D. N. Freedman (ed.), Yale University Press, 1992., 605-609.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Joahim Gnilka, *Teologija Novoga Zavjeta*. Herder Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1999., 225.

<sup>5</sup> Albin Škrinjar, *Teologija sv. Ivana*, Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove, Zagreb 1975., 383.

However, in this research, we wish to lean towards an exegetical interpretation of the tension in which John's community lived between Christ's part of salvation and the future promises of eternal goods.

## 1.2. Two Perspectives on John's Eschatology

The Fourth Gospel seems to present two different eschatological perspectives. One, specifically John's, which is fundamentally different from the traditional one, focuses on Christ, on His work of salvation, and on faith in Him as eschatological facts. The second perspective focuses attention on future events related to the end of the world. We encounter the first approach in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:13-21, 31-36), then in the statements about the resurrection (John 5:20-31; 6:39-40, 50-51; 11:1-44), and finally in the discourse on judgment (John 12:44-50). They argue that with the coming of Christ, salvation began, and was announced in the Old Testament. Of course, from the canonical perspective which reads the Bible as a unity.

The one who believes in Jesus becomes a partaker of all eschatological goods, including the work of the Holy Spirit (John 13-17). Alongside this first approach, we encounter a second approach to John's eschatology, which speaks of the resurrection of Christ on the last day (John 5:28ff.; 6:39, 40, 44, 57; 11:24) or of the last judgment (John 12:48) and eternal life (John 17:3). This life means a close communion with Christ, which transcends earthly boundaries and reaches its fullness in the resurrection of the body.<sup>6</sup> However, it should be said that this eschatological position begins on earth. This is John's "now" of personal decision. In John, there is no talk of the final time, although there is an idea of the resurrection of the dead "on the last day" and the judgment that follows (John 5:28; 6:39.40-41.44.54). For John, faith in the presence of the Risen One and his Spirit in the Community opens a new perspective of the possibility of becoming a participant in "eternal life" (John 6:47). During the decision to believe in Jesus Christ, judgment takes place. Accordingly, we can speak of eschatology in the present or of eschatology that is being realized.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Józef Kozyra, Eschatologija, in: *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, tom II., Dzieło Janowe-Mariusz Rosik (edd.), TUM, Wrocław, 2008., 219-262; here 231.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Felix Porsch, *Ivanovo evanđelje*. Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2002., 57.

It is not excluded that between the two mentioned aspects of John's eschatology there is a tension between the present and future promises at the end of time. As many authors, Lech Stachowiak explains the uniqueness of John's eschatology and the tension between the present and the future by the fact that we simply witness the two different layers of redaction of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, he proposes a view of the exegesis of John's Gospel through the form of realized eschatology, the present, and the texts on the eschatology of the future should be considered from the standpoint of the traditional-synoptic due to mutual harmony.

### 1.3. The so-called "realized eschatology"

A Polish biblical scholar Stanisław Gądecki, as many other biblical scholars, calls contemporary or current eschatology in the Gospel of John "accomplished eschatology". He deals with the questions of the presence of eternal life in the present.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the eschatology of the future is of less interest to John, although it is present in some parts of its account. The fourth Gospel emphasizing the eschatology that is currently present and is already being realized, shows that in Jesus the realized salvation was announced for the last times. In Jesus, God revealed himself in a complete and perfect way. He fulfilled the plan of salvation and gave people the gifts necessary to achieve it. Those who believe in Christ are already sons of God and, thanks to faith and the sacraments, have eternal life, the beginning of which will not be the last day and the resurrection. The new life will be only a continuation of the life they already possess. Eternal life after death will only be a closer and more complete union with Jesus and the Father in heaven, which is already the portion of believers on earth thanks to faith and the sacraments.<sup>10</sup>

M.-E. Boismard approaches the problem differently. He seeks the first layer of future theology or apocalyptic understood in a new way in a later period in the sense of a realized eschatology. This would take place as a rereading of the last redactor of the Gospel. This would achieve a new theological perspective and reduce the tension between Jesus' coming and the present. Accordingly, the decisive moment is not an eschatological event, it is not "the day of

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lech Stachowiak, (edd.), *Ewangelia wg św. Jana*, Pallotinum, Poznań – Warszawa, 1975., 418-419.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Stanisław Gądecki, *Wstęp do Pism Janowych*, Gaudentinum, Gniezno, 1996., 58.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Józef Kozyra, Eschatologija, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, 232.

judgment”, but the decision of faith that ensures eternal life. (John 11:25-26). It is not only Jesus’ words but also an act. Jesus says “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though he dies, has eternal life”. And after that Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. Furthermore, it should be read from John’s text that the dead are not only people who have died but also those who live in sin. They are subject to judgment.<sup>11</sup>

In the Fourth Gospel, another way of looking at John’s eschatology points to Christ and his action as the basis of an eschatological fact that is already present. It means accomplished. Only the last act of eschatology is expected in the future. Biblical studies of the last century sought different solutions for the concept of eschatology in the New Testament. C. H. Dodd is the author of the concept of “realized eschatology” in John’s writings. He claims that the apostle John understood and presented Jesus’ death and resurrection as eschatological events in the fullest sense of the word.

R. Bultmann approaches John’s eschatology as a religious scientist, subjecting eschatological events to an existential interpretation and depriving them of the characteristics of a saving event.<sup>12</sup> This means that he rejected all announcements of future eschatology, considering them to be the interpretation of the church’s editorial office. Thus, he rejected the connection of Christ’s words about the eating of his body and his blood with the eschatology that is happening now and will take place in the resurrection of the body (John 6:39.40.44.54).<sup>13</sup>

There is also a catholic position that is adapted to Bultmann’s thought, and is represented for instance by J. Blank. It is not about the essential issues of future things that await man or about the body of Christ, but about a detail that has been mentioned several times already. It is about a personal decision in faith and hope for Jesus that will be revealed on the day of judgment. As Škrinjar notes, punishment will not come by itself; it will be decreed by a judge. The word *krisis*, along with punishment, also means condemnation. For John, the dualism of soul and body is alien. That is why faith in Jesus introduces that hope into realized eschatology: now, even though he dies physically, he has eternal life (John 11:24-26).<sup>14</sup> However, as Stachowiak notes:

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stanisław Gądecki, *Wstęp do Pism Janowych*, 418-419.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Józef Kozyra, *Eschatologija, Teologia Nowego Testamentu* 227.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Abin Škrinjar, *Teologija sv. Ivana*, 385.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, Abin Škrinjar, *Teologija sv. Ivana*, 385.

“Accomplished (realized) eschatology does not lead to a conclusion about the complete thought of John because it does not take into account the theological element that seems to be essential. Undoubtedly, the evangelist wants to emphasize that the Old Testament expectation of salvation in the future has become in Jesus the present and decisive.”<sup>15</sup> It is a realized eschatology in the saving action of Jesus Christ, his promise that is closely related to a personal decision.

The meeting of Jesus with Martha and Mary indicates a realized eschatology, which is one of the aspects of this research. Hence, in the following parts of the paper, we will analyze two Jesus’ dialogues which put some light on the John’s eschatology.

## 2. THE DETERMINATION OF THE CONTEXT OF THE PERICOPES IN JOHN 11:17-44

To properly present the dynamism of the discourse on faith and hope in the Gospel of John, which reaches its peak in the presentation of what we call realized eschatology, it is necessary to first highlight the context of the passage that best illustrates this. The selected text seems to be one of the best examples of presenting the importance of the already realized, i.e. realized eschatology in the Gospel of John. It is a dialogue within the genre of the encounter between Jesus and Martha, and her sister Mary, in the eleventh chapter of the fourth Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

However, the eleventh chapter itself focuses on the story of Jesus’ friend Lazarus and his sisters and Jesus’ relationship with the same family. The biblical narrative begins with John 11:1. The evangelist places his readers in a literary context in order to then direct them to the central theological motif of the entire eleventh chapter, which is, on the one hand, human faith in the eternal life that Christ himself gives, and on the other hand, the presentation of the power of Christ who, as the Son of God, is capable of granting eternal life to man. These truths are harmoniously integrated into the literary dynamism of the eleventh chapter of the Gospel

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<sup>15</sup> Lech Stachowiak, (edd.), *Ewangelia wg św. Jana*, 422.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Maurizio Marcheselli, *L’escatologia futura in Gv 1,19–12,50*, *RTE* (1997.) 1, 149-171.

of John.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore worth presenting the provisional literary structure of this chapter, which, based on some literary markers in the text, such as the change of speaker or interlocutor, place or time of action, can be marked as follows:

- a) John 11, 1-6: placing the reader in the space and time of the narrative and providing basic information;
- b) John 11, 7-16: conversation between Jesus, the disciples and the people;
- c) John 11, 17-27: meeting and conversation with Martha;
- d) John 11, 28-37: meeting and conversation with Mary;
- e) John 11, 38-44: calling Lazarus to life;
- f) John 11, 45-54: the decision of the Sanhedrin to condemn and kill Jesus.

It is also important to mention that the entire eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John should be placed in an even broader literary framework of the text of John, because it is connected to the texts that precede and follow it in several ways. Let us highlight some literary connections with the entire Gospel of John.

The tenth chapter of the Gospel of John focuses on the presentation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10:1-11) and then on the description of his identity as the Son of God who reveals the Father. The same chapter places Christ, and then the readers, in the context of the celebration of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (cf. John 10:22).

In the twelfth chapter, the reader will be informed by the narrator that he is in the time preceding the Passover (cf. John 12:1). For this reason, the eleventh chapter of John's text can be considered, as many biblical scholars do, as a text that gradually introduces what is the center of the entire Gospel, which is the depiction of Jesus' last Passover with the disciples, which reaches its climax in Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection on the cross.<sup>18</sup> Ruben Zimmermann notices so well that while in the eleventh chapter the unpleasant smell of death is felt, in the twelfth chapter the smell of nard ointment with which Mary anointed Jesus' body dominates.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni. Volume 1 (1,1-12, 50)*, Claudiana, Torino, 2017., 490-491.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 519-520.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, The narrative hermeneutics of John 11. Learning with Lazarus how to understand death, life, and resurrection, in: Craig. R. Koester i Reimund Bieringer (ed.), *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, 75-101, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2008., here 97-101.

However, the anointing of Christ itself is only a prelude to his passion and death.

Finally, the very resurrection of Lazarus from the grave, as will be seen in John 11:45-54, will be the reason for Jesus to be condemned to death. In this way, it becomes clear that Jesus' gift of life to Lazarus can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, it is a depiction of the meaning of Jesus' person, which is the gift of life to those who truly believe in him, and on the other hand, it is a depiction of what he himself will soon experience, which is death and being laid in the grave. In other words, Jesus' return to life of Lazarus serves the evangelist in a proleptic way to foreshadow what the meaning of Jesus' life will be.<sup>20</sup> He himself will be laid in the grave and then rise from the grave on the third day in the power of the Spirit of God. The literary connections between the eleventh chapter and the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the same gospel are more than obvious. The first and fundamental motif is death, then the swaddling clothes in which the deceased is buried, and finally the return to life itself.

Everything that has been said so far greatly facilitates the analysis of smaller literary units in the context of the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John. The conversation about the death of Lazarus, Christ's friend, will serve a much greater purpose. It is a depiction of faith in eternal life, or rather, a depiction of something that theologians call realized or realized eschatology. Now when Lazarus died, his sister Martha first talks to Jesus, and their conversation is directed towards a depiction of faith and hope in eternal life. However, as is evident from their conversation, Christ's view and Martha's view of life that has no end differ somewhat. Therefore, our further analysis will be directed towards a more detailed analysis of the same dialogue in order to read from its guidelines for a discourse on faith in eternal, i.e. true life in God. We will consider the segment John 11:17-27 or the dialogue between Jesus and Martha. In addition to Martha, we will also look at the depiction of Mary in dialogue with Christ and finally at the very resurrection or resuscitation of Lazarus, which is the culmination of the entire chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 512-513.

3. AN EXEGETICAL-THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN JESUS AND MARTHA AS A STARTING POINT IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE "REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY" IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

*When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.*

*Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.*

*When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home.*

*Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*

*(But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."*

*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."*

*Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."*

*Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,*

*and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

*She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."*

*(John 11: 17-27)*

The eleventh chapter of John's Gospel is dominated by two dialogues. The one with Martha and the other with Mary. Lazarus' sisters thus become models of disciples who teach the reader about the realities of eternal life.<sup>21</sup> The first dialogue is that between Martha and Jesus. It is very dynamic and emphasizes the doctrine of the last things, or eschatology. Martha, after learning that Jesus is in the house, comes to the same house and enters dialogue with Christ.

The initiator of their conversation is her very strong sentence: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." (cf. John 11:21). The same sentence will later be uttered by the other sister,

<sup>21</sup> For further analysis of model of faith in the Gospel of John see: Alan Marchadour, *I personaggi del Vangelo di Giovanni. Specchio per una cristologia narrativa*. Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2007.

Mary. With this sentence, both shows, on the one hand, their faith in the power of Christ, that is, that he is capable of giving people life.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Martha, and we will see later Mary, show that they miss what is truly important in the entire biblical pericope, which is faith in the resurrection that goes beyond the limits of material life in the body.<sup>23</sup> Martha's words therefore occur on the occasion of an open conversation between Jesus and Martha about matters concerning eternal life. Christ therefore, wanting to direct her to what is truly important, tells Martha that her brother will be resurrected. But even then, Martha again shows that she does not understand the person of Christ, i.e. the one who is speaking to her.

Marta's response that she knows that her brother will rise again on the last day thus reflects the state of her faith in the after-life. For her, the resurrection is a statement about future things and not a spatial-present factum. In other words, the doctrine of eschatology is a statement about future things, not about the present relationship with Christ in faith.<sup>24</sup>

Christ, who listens to Martha's answers, always goes a step further. It is thus evident in the text that Christ does not reject the traditional discourse about the resurrection that will happen one day, but rather deepens it. He does so by presenting himself as resurrection and life. The text thus echoes the well-known *ego eimi*, or *I am*, expression that is characteristic of the Gospel of John and depicts Christ as the revealer of God himself.<sup>25</sup> Christ therefore claims for himself that he is the resurrection and life, and that whoever believes in him will never die. It is worth pausing over the Greek text and noticing a few things.

### 3.1. True life

The first thing worth highlighting is the discourse on life. The life Jesus speaks of is *zoe*, that is, the true life that has no end. The Gospel of John thus distinguishes biological life, which is denoted by the noun *bios*, from *zoe*, which indicates life in God.<sup>26</sup> In John 11, when Jesus says that he is life, he is referring to *zoe*, because

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 507-508.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, The narrative hermeneutics of John 11. Learning with Lazarus how to understand death, life, and resurrection, 75-101.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Maurizio Marcheselli, L'escatologia futura in Gv 1,19-12,50, 149-171.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Johannes Beutler, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni. Commentario*. Gregorian & Biblical Press, Roma, 2016., 364; Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 505.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 505.

that is what is stated in the Greek text of the Gospel of John. This life, however, is available to man through faith in the person of Christ himself. Although some authors, such as Schnackenburg, argue that *zoe* does not necessarily mean a life different from the material one.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2. Believing in Christ

The second element we emphasize is the fact that when the Greek text speaks of faith in the person of Christ, it uses the verb *pisteuo*, which is translated as to believe, but it does so use the active participle of the same verb. The evangelist thus points to the importance of active and permanent faith in the person of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the one who already believes in Christ here and now has access to eternal life.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the participle of the verb *pisteuo*, the preposition *eis* is also used with the accusative and the personal pronoun *mou*, which in the Gospel of John is always an indicator of faith in the person of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> Where such a phrase is found, it is true faith in the person of Christ. Everything mentioned so far aims to direct the view from faith that looks to a future resurrection to a resurrection that is already realized in faith now. He who believes in Christ now already shares the eternal life.

### 3.3. "Realized eschatology" as an epilogue of the conversation with Martha

Jesus' speech about faith in him is ultimately directed at the reader's reflection on the realized or realized eschatology. The speech about Christ and his work of salvation of people thus becomes a guarantee of coming to life in God. That is why Christ can say that even he who dies will live because the life he is talking about transcends material life. Ultimately, every person must die to pass through death into a life that has no end, and which Christ made possible. Christ himself died and did not remain in life in a materi-

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Il vangelo di Giovanni II*. Paideia, Torino, 2000., 550.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Maurizio Marcheselli, Gesu di Nazaret. Esspressione della speranza ebraica nel Quarto vangelo. In: Goldstein, Beniamino, Luca Mazzinghi i Maurizio Marcheselli (ed.). *La Speranza nella tradizione ebraica*, 55-81. Reggio Emilia: Edizioni San Lorenzo, 2024., here 74-79.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 507-509.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 508-509.

al way, but opened the door to a new life. However, Martha has not yet entered such a sphere of belief, and as we will see, neither has Mary. However, Christ gradually introduces them to such a faith.<sup>31</sup>

Introducing Martha to a higher level of belief, Christ now personally asks her about her faith in him as the resurrection and giver of new life. Her response is now much stronger, and this is also expressed by the perfect tense of the verb *pisteuo* in the Greek text of the Gospel. Martha says that she has come to faith in Christ, i.e. that he is the Anointed One, the Son of God and the one who is coming into the world.<sup>32</sup> Although not all biblical scholars agree with this conclusion, as some argue that Martha simply continues to believe what she believed before.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is worth concluding that by reading this text, each reader is put to the test of his personal faith in Christ and his ability to be a believer here and now to enter more and more into the spaces of eternal life, and to give the material the dignity to which it belongs.

The next passage that will be used in the research of realized eschatology is John 11:28-36 which is the encounter between Jesus and Mary.

#### 4. THE DIALOGUE WITH MARY

*When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. "When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you*

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, *The narrative hermeneutics of John 11. Learning with Lazarus how to understand death, life, and resurrection*, 90-93; Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 508-509.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Renzo Infante, *Giovanni. Introduzione, traduzione e commento*. Cinisello Balsamo, Milano, 2015, 276-277.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *The Faith of Martha and Mary. A Narrative Approach to John 11, 17-40*, *Biblica* 75 (1994.), 471-493.

*laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." (John 11, 28-36)*

After the conversation with Martha, the reader now follows Christ's encounter with his other sister – Mary. Their conversation should really be called an encounter, not a conversation. Because Mary, unlike Martha, is not the one who speaks so much with words as with emotions, and as the Italian biblical scholar Renzo Infante claims, the theatricality in the text is extremely emphasized.<sup>34</sup> Her encounter with Christ is very emotional, and it begins in the same way as Martin's with the sentence: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11, 32). Having said these words, Mary begins to cry together with her companions, and soon after he himself sees the place where Lazarus was laid, and Christ is the one who cries in shock.

The dialogue between Jesus and Mary is thus a dialogue based on emotions, not words alone. They feel each other's person. Thus, in the encounter between Mary and Jesus, Jesus' humanity, or humanity, is strongly emphasized. The same humanity will be more than visible in the real suffering in a completely human way on the cross. Mary's and Christ's weeping is thus an indicator of the value of human life on earth, but it is also an indicator of the value of that new life in Christ. But it is reached through life in the body and death in the same body. Death is not the end, but a transition to a life that has no end.

What is also worth emphasizing about the meeting of Mary and Jesus is the importance of the reciprocity of the relationship between Mary and Jesus, that is, Christ and numerous female characters in the Gospel of John and Johannine theological thought.<sup>35</sup> Already in John 4, the reader could come to numerous theological conclusions through the relationship between the Samaritan woman and Jesus, following a male-female dialogue. The same is the case in John 11.<sup>36</sup> It seems as if the evangelist John purposefully wants to show the reader the relationship between Christ and the Church in the manner of relations, or the depiction of male-female conversations, because the Church itself is, for example, depicted

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Renzo Infante, *Giovanni*, 278-279.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom. A Feminist Historical-Literary Analysis of the Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville (MN), 1998., 83-113.

<sup>36</sup> To see more about the modeling of characters in the Gospel of John see: Roberto Vignolo, *Personaggi del Quarto Vangelo. Figure della fede in San Giovanni*. Milano: Glossa editrice. 2003.

in John's Revelation as a bride and one who is preparing to enter into an eternal relationship with her bridegroom (cf. Rev 19). And so, we come to the following passage, which speaks of the resurrection of Lazarus.

##### 5. THE CALLING OF LAZARUS TO LIFE

*So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So, Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." (John 11, 38-44).*

The solemn conclusion of the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John is Christ's calling Lazarus back to life (cf. John 11:43-44). Therefore, we can speak of the resurrection of Lazarus. Having reached the tomb, Christ is depicted as the one whose voice brings Lazarus back to life, but before doing so, he again calls upon Martha to be the one who will believe (cf. John 11:40). Faith thus becomes the basis for Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus. The faith of Martha's sister is necessary, and the reader is looking what is going to happen.

Jesus came to wake Lazarus (John 11:11) and the situation is somehow really tied to the words of John in 5, 25: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, the 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."*

The act of faith is thus shown as an act in which the person is ready to hear the voice of Christ that pierces even the tombstone. And the dead hear the voice of Christ. This is what we assume must take place to every believer once in death. But to be able to do such an act, the believer must learn to listen to the voice of Christ.<sup>37</sup> Both the living and the dead are thus able to hear the voice of Christ who has the power to bring back them to the life.

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jean Zumstein, *Il Vangelo secondo Giovanni*, 511-512.

However, it should be said once again that the revival of Lazarus, or some can call it even resurrection, is only a return to life in the body, and that true resurrection to life will occur later at the moment of death. The death which presupposes the faith of the one dying. The resurrection of Lazarus and the return to life on earth are thus only an image of the lasting life that every believer gains through faith in the risen Christ, who himself, through death, in the power of the Spirit, came to resurrection.<sup>38</sup> Lazarus' illness and death, and then his resurrection, thus teach the realism of life.<sup>39</sup> The realism expressed in the fact that it is irrevocable argument that every human being must at the end die. Therefore, the theology of John 11 in its totality is much more complex than it appears on the first hand.

## 6. SOME THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE IN JOHN 11

In his encounter with the sisters Martha and Mary, Jesus seeks their faith. Right now, the "hour" is coming when God will be glorified because Lazarus' illness is not unto death, but that the Son of Man may be glorified. Martha and Mary had the faith that Jesus sought. And what about Lazarus? We can think perhaps also that Lazarus' death was a spiritual death, even though we read in the text that he died physically. Though this is unlikely because of the entire narrative dynamic of John 11. However, we will now try to give some final theological remarks coming out after the analysis of John 11:17-44.

### 6.1. Models of faith

Through the presentation of models of faith in the context of the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John, our analysis was able to reach certain theological conclusions. The first and fundamental one, of course, concerns faith in the afterlife. Martha's model of faith showed the possibility of growth in faith that understands resurrection and life in God only as a future event, to faith in the present that is already capable of entering into a deeper relation-

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Johannes Beutler, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni. Commentario*, Gregorian & Biblical Press, Roma, 2016., 368-369.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, *The narrative hermeneutics of John 11. Learning with Lazarus how to understand death, life, and resurrection*, 90-101.

ship with God. He who already now and here on earth in faith opens himself to Christ and his person rises above mere concern for the body. Faith in a life that is true life in Christ thus deprives man of the anxiety and disharmony of life on earth in the body. In other words, faith is then not cheap, but is capable of accepting illness and pain and being focused on what is much more important, which is a relationship with the risen Christ. Both Martha and Mary learn in this way that deeper faith is achieved through personal dialogue with Christ and immersion in the mystery of his person. Their characters thus become models of the lives of believers, and not just a depiction of them as people.<sup>40</sup> Every believer can identify with these models today as they read the same biblical texts, and thus grow in faith. In this way, faith is not something that is absolute certainty, but a dynamic and personal search for God in a living relationship with him. And in this way, it becomes clearer that man himself is the one who becomes the active creator of the image of God.<sup>41</sup>

## 6.2. Christ's relationship with the people then and now in the Jubilee Year of 2025.

A very important theological emphasis of the biblical narrative about Lazarus and his sisters is certainly the one that points to Christ's relationship with people as such. Christ shows himself to be the one who loves man immensely. He weeps for him because he truly loves him. Every believer is called to discover the same love every day, and especially in the context of the great jubilee in the bosom of the Catholic Church, which emphasizes the hope of eternal life with God, which has its root in the fact that the love of God has been poured out in the hearts of the faithful through the Holy Spirit who has been given to believers (cf. Rom 5:1-5).

The world in which man lives today needs faith, hope and love. All because in this way, suffering and worries about the temporal are overcome. He who believes in Christ and builds his life on him, and consequently sees his foundation of hope in Christ, looks at his own and other people's lives differently.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, *The narrative hermeneutics of John 11. Learning with Lazarus how to understand death, life, and resurrection*, 90-100.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ivan Benaković, *Biblijski govor i njegovo ispravno (ne)shvaćanje za kreiranje (ne)ispravne slike Boga*. In: J. Bošnjaković i Drago Jerebic (ed.), *U kakvog Boga ljudi danas vjeruju odnosno ne vjeruju?; V kakšnega Boga ljudje danes verujejo oz. ne verujejo?*, Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Đakovu, Đakovo, 2022., 13-32.

The difficulties of life, and ultimately death itself, are not the tragic end of human efforts, but are a transition to a life that has no end. John's theological thought speaks powerfully about this life through the story of Lazarus, his illness, and also death. Death can thus not only be looked into the eyes, but must be looked into the eyes. It shows man his limitations and directs him towards the horizon of eternal life.

Lazarus, who is brought back to life, will have to die in the body again, just like every believer. Lazarus's raising from the grave cannot replace his true resurrection to eternal life (Zimmermann 2008, 98-101). This makes it clear how the story of Lazarus the Evangelist served to turn the reader's gaze from observing life in the body to a new life in the spirit, the origin of which is Christ himself. In this way, the discourse on faith and hope in the Gospel of John harmoniously fits into the entire New Testament discourse on hope. It has its meaning and foundation only in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

Although the position of faith of Martha and Mary, when observing the entire Gospel of John, is quite clear, the position of Lazarus himself is not so clear. Jesus loved Martha, Mary, but also Lazarus (cf. John 11:5). In fact, this love was obvious (cf. John 11:4). One could conclude that the resurrection of Lazarus is not yet the true resurrection that will happen at the end of time. Now Lazarus is called to a new dimension of faith. What his sisters believed in has happened.

Christians of the twenty-first century are on this same path. In the midst of many wars and widespread suffering, Pope Francis called the Church to trust in God: "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). The Pope emphasized that faith and hope are born precisely in the encounter and dialogue with Jesus.

„Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life" (Rom 5:19). That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God's grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ivan Benaković, Kršćanska nada kroz prizmu Pavlova korpusa biblijskih spisa, *Communio. Međunarodni katolički časopis. Hrvatska sekcija* 152 (2025.), 126-140.

<sup>43</sup> Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit. Bull Of Indiction Of The Ordinary Jubilee Of The Year 2025.*, 3. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/hr/bulls/docu->

True dialogue, according to the Gospel of John, takes place within the framework of an encounter of love. Just as Jesus entered and very often entered the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, so everyone who wants to overcome the contradictions of this world in hope is invited to come to Jesus and pass through the door. It is precisely He who is (*Ego eimi*) who presents himself as the door within the Gospel of John (cf. John 10).

The pope Francis when opening the Holy Jubilee Year of 2025 within the Catholic world said: „For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. *Jn* 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (*1 Tim* 1:1).<sup>44</sup> Therefore it is one more reason to take seriously John’s eschatological perspective which is deeply concerned with the personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. The more one is personally oriented to Christ more he will be partaker of the Life that never ends.

#### CONCLUSION

In our paper we tried to explain the Johannine perspective on the eschatology. The so-called “realized eschatology” by John was put on the “test” through the analysis of John 11: 17-44. The specificity of John’s eschatology allows for a deeper approach to this topic. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John’s eschatology connects the future and the present in the personal act of choosing Jesus, which means that faith and hope already in the moment of reading of the text and during the life in the community brings to the eternal life. Jesus himself is the Life (*zoe*) and ready to offer the life to everyone who approaches him or passes through the door of the sheepfold (John 10:7). In the act of faith which is taking place in the present reality of believers, the life in his completeness is being given. Hence John’s eschatology is called “realized eschatology” for the right reason.

The text which narrates the encounter of Jesus, Martha and Mary served us to explain what the “realized eschatology” about is. Hopefully, it was detectable in our investigation, how the realized eschatology operates. We may say that the “realized eschatology”

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ments/20240509\_spes-non-confundit\_bolla-giubileo2025.html (accessed 24 june 2025.).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

perspective somehow reduces the tension between the present and the future in the life of believers. Through faith and hope, Jesus' disciple becomes already now partakers of the eternity.

In the context of Jubilee of 2025, the Catholics from all over the world passing through the Holy doors of the papal basilicas in Rome or elsewhere are firmly convinced that they pass through Jesus who gives them the life in abundance. To say that more poetically - behind the Door are "green pastures" (cf. Ps 23) where the Eternal Pastor awaits to feed his flock. However, this very act of passing of the Door if not understood as an act of faith will not be something significant. Only the passage full of sincere faith would provoke the abundance of mercy by the Father.

It is very likely that not everyone can understand (cf. John 6:66) what the "realized eschatology" is because the text in John 11 shows how Lazarus stepped into a new perspective, into a new chance of life. Thus, Lazarus himself in the text is depicted as the one who listen to the voice of Christ. In this way he remains equally as Martha and Mary does, a model of faith to all believers nowadays. Those believers who every day seek the face of the Heavenly Father.

Amid many negative events worldwide that cause a lack of faith and trust in Jesus, the believers are called to pass through the Jubilee Door and to feel the relief of being reconciled with the Father. In other words, coming to Jesus in the act of deep faith could be the beginning of the Life that never ends.

VJERA I NADA U IVANOVU EVANĐELJU.  
BIBLIJSKO-TEOLOŠKA ANALIZA IV 11, 17-44 U SVJETLU  
"REALIZIRANE ESHATOLOGIJE"

*Sažetak*

Ovaj rad donosi biblijsko-teološku analizu Iv 11,17-44, s posebnim naglaskom na teme vjere i nade. Kroz pomno čitanje Isusovih dijaloga s Martom i Marijom istražuje se specifična Ivanova perspektiva vjere i eshatologije. U Ivanovu evanđelju vjera u Isusa nije samo nada usmjerena prema budućnosti, već sadašnje sudjelovanje u božanskom životu. Ova teološka vizija odražava ono što su mnogi bibličari prepoznali kao Ivanovu „realiziranu eshatologiju” — pogled prema kojem vječni život nije isključivo buduće obećanje, nego sadašnja stvarnost za one koji vjeruju u uskrsloga Krista. Rad

tvrdi da, prema Ivanu, vjerovati u Isusa sada znači već ulaziti u Božji prostor. U svjetlu Jubilarne godine 2025., koju Katolička Crkva slavi kao vrijeme obnove vjere i nade, ovo istraživanje želi istaknuti suvremenu relevantnost Ivanove eshatološke vizije. Analizom pripovijesti o uskrsnuću Lazara, posebno kroz Isusove susrete s Martom i Marijom, rad nastoji ponuditi dublje razumijevanje načina na koji Ivanovo evanđelje povezuje sadašnju vjeru s stvarnošću vječnoga života.

*Ključne riječi:* vjera, nada, Ivanovo evanđelje, Marta, Marija, Lazar, jubilej, realizirana eshatologija