

JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11:17-44
Key Verse: 25,26

Lesson #30

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb 4 days. Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead. In verses 14, 15, he told his disciples, "Lazarus is dead and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." We can see why Jesus delayed his trip to Bethany. He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus and he wanted to give them a better blessing. He wanted to teach the sisters that they should not feel self-pity, nor should they put their hope in weak Lazarus. They must live by faith and glorify God for as long as they live (4). Jesus wanted to teach his disciples to overcome their fear of death by faith, and to work hard for the glory of God as long as they lived (4). Women must solve the problem of self-pity and their spirit of dependance on a sick Lazarus. Men must solve their fear problem by faith. Then, they can live like men, for the glory of God. Jesus loved Mary and Martha, not with human sympathy, which makes one more miserable; he loved them by faith, which could make them strong—strong enough to overcome the fear of death. Jesus love them with the love of God and Jesus loved his disciples, so he planted faith in God in their fearful hearts. This was the best expression of God's love toward them.

2. Jesus wept (17—37)

The situation Jesus found in Bethany was as follows: Lazarus had already been in the tomb, wrapped in grave clothes, for four days. Many Jews had come from Jerusalem to comfort Mary and Martha in the loss of their brother. They were soaked in sorrow and in the darkness of death. When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Martha came to meet him and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She expressed her sorrow and regret at her brother's death to Jesus. And she suggested that even now, if Jesus would, he could do something. (22)

Jesus knew that she was helpless in the face of her brother's death. He taught her the most important truth of God about himself. Read verses 25,26. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Jesus words, "I am the resurrection. ." is a sentence so deep and inclusive that not even a life-time of study can reveal its full meaning. We must simply believe what Jesus said: "I am the resurrection." Resurrection is victory over death. Jesus is the only one who has won the victory over death. People are doomed to be defeated by the power of death. But in Jesus, the resurrection, there is victory, and there is eternal life, and there is a living hope. (1 Pet.1:3,4)

How did Martha respond to Jesus' words? We can see that Martha knew about the resurrection (24); and she knew that Jesus was the *Christ*.(27) But we find some inconsistencies between her theology (21,22,24,27) and her practical faith(39). She loved Jesus very much, but up to this time, she had not really believed in her heart that

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. So her fundamental life problem remained totally unsolved, and, when her brother Lazarus died, she utterly despaired.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was, she said the same thing that Martha had said. She fell at his feet and said the most sorrowful and regretful words in the world: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Look at verse 33a. Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping. Mary's brother had died, so she had reason to weep. Why did the Jews weep over someone else's brother? Maybe they were expressing their deepest sympathy to the sisters at their bereavement. Weeping might be their habit. Maybe they wept because of Mary and Martha's sorrow and self-pity. We know one thing for sure. They were motivated to weep by the death of Lazarus. They were helpless before death. And they despaired. Perhaps their tears flowed from a premonition of their own future deaths.

But what about Jesus? How did he feel? Look at verse 33b: ".he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled." Why was he troubled in spirit? An immediate reason may have been that he entered into their sorrow and felt their anguish. But the main reason for his troubled spirit was that he saw that his friends overwhelmed and controlled by the power of death. Verse 35 says: "Jesus wept." Jesus wept because he saw their spiritual sickness. He could not but weep when he saw dying people suffering because of the sting of death. Jesus could not but weep when he saw their unbelief.

3. Jesus raises Lazarus (38—44)

Look at verse 39. When Jesus came to the entrance of the cave tomb he said, "Take away the stone." Martha was quick to point out that Lazarus had been dead and in the tomb four days. Jesus rebuked Martha indirectly by saying, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (40)

Before taking any action, Jesus prayed to God for the raising of dead Lazarus. We can see here Jesus' faith in God. He believed that God could raise Lazarus from the dead. (41) Jesus also shows us that his purpose was not self-glory. He wanted to plant faith in God in the people. (42)

Then the stone was taken away, Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." What happened?

Look at verse 44. The dead man staggered out of the tomb in his grave clothes. This sign teaches us several things. First, the word of Jesus is mightier than the power of death. When we want to overcome our death problem, we must listen to Jesus' voice, "I am the resurrection." Second, this sign shows us the way to solve the fundamental problem of human beings, the death problem. When we believe that Jesus is the resurrection, the fear of death disappears and new strength and a new winsomeness come into our hearts. 'Ye are filled with living hope. Third, ultimately, this sign revealed the glory of God. God showed us the certainty of victory over death and the assurance of a glorious resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord.