

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 11:17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

29 As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

NOTES

Assurance of Victory over Death

Lesson Text: John 11:17-32

Related Scriptures: Revelation 1:17-20; John 5:21-29;
Luke 10:38-42

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Bethany

GOLDEN TEXT—“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

Lesson Exposition

A PURPOSEFUL DEATH— John 11:17-22

Lazarus dies (John 11:17-18). Jesus sovereignly planned that the sickness and subsequent death of Lazarus would result in a miracle that would strengthen the faith of His disciples. The timing of this event fit that design perfectly.

When Jesus finally arrived back in Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. One day of travel for the messenger: two days of delay by Jesus, and one day of travel for Him and His disciples.

Jesus was about to do something that would establish His messiahship and His deity beyond doubt. His disciples' faith in Him would be indelibly confirmed in their hearts forever. John records this event as the climactic miracle of Jesus' ministry, and one that ought to confirm our faith in Him as well.

Jesus arrives (John 11:19-20). The proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem and the prominence of Lazarus's family led to many people being present to com-

fort Mary and Martha after his death.

Both Martha and Mary were beloved by the people around Bethany. All indications point to the fact that their household was a prominent one in the community.

Martha's faith (John 11:21-22). Martha had been full of hope when the messenger was dispatched to tell Jesus of Lazarus's illness, and she expressed this upon meeting Him: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (vs. 21). She was not complaining; she realized that Lazarus had died shortly after the messenger had been sent to Jesus, and that He could not have arrived in time. On the other hand, she was confident that if He had been there, He could have saved Lazarus.

A RESURRECTION PROMISED— John 11:23-27

A comforting promise (John 11:23-24). Jesus' response to Martha was a simple, straightforward statement: “Thy brother shall rise again”

(vs. 23). But this did little to assuage her grief because she interpreted Jesus' words only in terms of a future, general resurrection on the last day. This is evinced by her use of the phrase "the resurrection at the last day." "When Jesus said, 'Your brother will rise again,' she attributed it to the future resurrection—'When everyone else rises, on resurrection day.' But Jesus did not mean an eventual, distant resurrection, He meant that Lazarus would rise again that very day!" (Comfort and Lins, eds., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, Tyndale).

A glorious affirmation (John 11:25-27). This is the fifth of John's seven recorded "I AM" statements. All resurrection and life is in Jesus Christ alone; without Him there is neither. There is no hope of eternal life apart from Jesus, and it is promised only to those who trust in Him as Lord and Saviour.

Jesus' declaration that He is the resurrection and the life is inextricably related with the assurance that all who believe in Him will live forever, even if they have suffered physical death. In addition, and no less essentially related, is the promise that those who are alive and trust in Him will never die.

For believers, all physical death does is end our earthly lives as we transition into eternal life in the Lord's presence. We can be confident with Paul that we shall be "absent from the body, and . . . present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

A RESURRECTION ASSURED— John 11:28-32

Mary called (John 11:28-30). Martha went to tell Mary of Jesus' arrival and His desire that she come to Him.

Mary's response was enthusiastic as she "arose quickly, and came unto him" (vs. 29). Jesus waited for Mary to arrive at the place where He had spoken to Martha.

Mary's devotion (John 11:31-32).

As Mary hurried out of the house, those comforting her assumed she was going to the tomb to mourn; so they loyally followed her in order to provide continued comfort. When Mary arrived where Jesus was waiting for her, she fell at His feet, exclaiming, as Martha had, her confidence that Jesus could have healed her brother if He had been there.

These are the only words of Mary that the New Testament records in her three appearances in the Gospels. In Luke 10:39 she is found sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him teach. In John 12:3 she anoints His feet with a very costly, aromatic perfume and wipes them with her hair. How deeply she loved Him!

—Keith E. Eggert.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Jesus intend to use Lazarus's death in regard to His disciples?
2. How long had Lazarus been dead by the time Jesus arrived?
3. What does the large number of comforters with Mary and Martha indicate about their household?
4. How did Martha affirm her steadfast confidence in Jesus?
5. How did Martha interpret Jesus' promise of Lazarus's resurrection?
6. What two truths are included in Jesus' "I AM" statement?
7. What does physical death mean for genuine believers?
8. What was Mary's immediate action when she heard Jesus had come?
9. What did Mary do when she arrived where Jesus was waiting for her?
10. What other events in the Gospels reveal Mary's deep love for Jesus?

—Keith E. Eggert.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The death of a loved one is a painful experience, and we need God's people to comfort us during our grief (John 11:17-19).
2. Our hope in times of grief is the Lord Jesus Christ (vss. 20-22).
3. If we believe in Jesus, life does not end with our death on earth (vss. 23-24).
4. Death is not to be feared by the believer, for Jesus has conquered death and promises His followers eternal life (vs. 25).
5. Though physical death may take place on earth, those who have faith in Jesus will never experience spiritual death in hell (vs. 26).
6. Personal faith in Jesus brings hope in the midst of suffering; it does not exempt us from suffering (vss. 27-32).

—Brandon Byler.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How have you been comforted by someone during a period of grief? How have you been able to comfort someone else (John 11:17-19)?
2. Is it true that people are more willing to listen to the gospel during a time of grief? Why or why not (vss. 20-22)?
3. How do you comfort people who believe life on earth is all there is (vss. 23-24)?
4. Jesus said He is "the resurrection, and the life" (vs. 25). How does this truth impact our daily lives?

—Brandon Byler.

Golden Text Illuminated

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Jesus discloses to us a twofold assertion about Himself ("I am the resurrection and the life"), along with a word of assurance to believers. His "I am" statement alone asserts that He is God (cf. Ex. 3:14). He is the essence of resurrection power, meaning He is the source of all who will someday physically rise from the dead either to a resurrection of life or condemnation (cf. John 5:28-29). He Himself is the source of all life (cf. John 14:6), meaning that whoever keeps on believing in him will live forever spiritually even if he dies physically (cf. Matt. 17:2-3; II Cor. 5:8).

The late J. Vernon McGee once said, "Life begins the moment a person trusts in Jesus Christ. Whosoever believes in him will never die because he has already died for him."

Jesus is the Great Physician, and He has never lost a patient to spiritual death. He alone is the source of all life, health, and consciousness. An empty grave is proof that Jesus is truly the Resurrection and the Life. He awakens the bodies of the dead from sleep no matter how long they have lain in the grave. He Himself has full power to raise mortal men from the dead (cf. Mark 5:38-42; Luke 7:14-15). He predicted His own resurrection (cf. John 2:19). He Himself is risen from the dead (cf. Matt. 28:6-7; John 20:1-10). It is Jesus who gives life to all mankind (cf. Job 12:10; Acts 17:28).

—Kenneth E. Ware.