



Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life
John 11:17-27

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.

19 And many of the Jews had joined the women around 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 was sitting in the house.

21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Of all the hard things to do for friends one of the most difficult but the most necessary is to comfort them when they have just a loved one. It's difficult because to a certain extent we all know that as AW Pink put it "God alone can bind up the brokenhearted." It is of course even more difficult to comfort those who grieve without hope, either because they do not believe in Christ or because their loved one didn't. What can we say in truth on that day, that will offer any *real* comfort? The lesson of these verses is that it is only through faith in Christ that REAL comfort, real consolation, can be offered to the grieving.

The setting of this awesome miracle is the town of Bethany in the week before Passover, the week before Christ's own death.

In just a couple of verses, John gives us some very important details, for instance, he emphasizes the risk that Jesus was running by coming to Bethany. He had not only gone back to Judea, he was now **only two miles** away from Jerusalem, the seat of power of the very men who were seeking to kill him.

The vicinity of Jerusalem to Bethany is also important because it means that many of the Jews from that city had come to comfort the grieving women. Now that detail also lets us know that the family was probably fairly prominent. You had to have been someone fairly special and not just a typical villager to have had "many of the Jews" coming to stay with and console your relatives.

Historically, most of Jesus' followers are not well-to-do but this family that loved Him such was. We also know that they were fairly prosperous from the fact that Mary was able to anoint Jesus with very expensive perfume, worth 300 denarii, almost a years wages, in the next chapter.

Now at this point in time Jews were typically buried on the same day in which they died, but the burial was followed by 30 days of mourning by their immediate relatives.

The first part of that period of mourning is called **Sitting Shiva** – *from the Hebrew word for Seven* – *Sitting Shiva refers to a seven day period following the burial*, during this period the mourners literally sat on stools, they did not wash or wear sandals

It was expected during this period that friends would visit the bereaved and offer consolation

It would have been customary for Jesus to visit the house and for the sisters to receive Him seated on stools, that is why we read in verse 20 that Mary remains sitting in the house. But as soon as Martha hears the Master is coming she breaks the custom and rushes out to see him.

Her first words to Him were "**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.**" How many times do you think the sisters must already have said that since their brother had died?

Her words in verse 22 "**But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You**" are cryptic, Martha knows Jesus could have healed her brother, but the next verses indicate that she doesn't expect that he is about to raise Him from the dead. I cannot tell for sure, but I think this is Martha affirming that even the death of her brother – which from her perspective Jesus had promised wouldn't happen - has not broken her faith and confidence in Christ and His intimate relationship to the Father, neither does she doubt His power, especially for her own life.

Jesus' first words to her are, "**Your brother will rise again**" how many times do you think they had probably heard that over the past four days? Most if not all of the Jews from Jerusalem would have been believers in the resurrection, and I'm sure they used that as a means of comforting the grieving sisters. Now even the master, Jesus is saying it.

For her it is somewhat cold comfort, "**I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**" How distant the last day seems to someone who has just lost a loved one when every part of them is crying out because NOW and all of those tomorrows until then they are gone. Martha is thinking of the last day, the final resurrection, she assumes that must be what Jesus is referring to as well. But it isn't He is telling her she is about to receive what He had promised in His message: "**This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**"

What Jesus is seeking to do is to show her using another of the Great I AM statements that He IS the Resurrection and the Life. **There is no Resurrection, no Eternal Life without Him**

So what He is doing here with Martha is what he desires to do with all men, to turn them from a vague notion of a belief in life after death, to a personal belief in Him as the only one who can provide eternal life! And how else could He prove that except by showing his absolute power over death through the resurrection of one who Had believed in Him.

Jesus is not only going to say but show that while believers will experience physical death that because they are united to Him, they have the gift of eternal life. So as Leon Morris put it: ***“believers may die in the sense that they pass through the door we call physical death, but they will not die in the fuller sense. Death for them is but the gateway to further life and fellowship with God”***

Have you ever considered that the believer is only under the power of death while He is living? As we age, we see the effects of sin and death taking hold of our bodies, speeding us towards physical death, and yet once that process is complete, death can exercise no more power over us, as Calvin said ***“What is still more, death itself is a sort of emancipation from the bondage of death.”***

***Born Once, Die Twice
Born Twice, Die Once***

The moment someone puts their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He obtains what Jesus is speaking of here, he has already passed beyond the ability of death to hurt him. The sting of death is pulled, the victory of the grave is taken away. And that not conditionally, but forever, death can never be re-enthroned in the life of someone has truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ:

***John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.***

Many things can be taken away from Christians, your money and possessions can be stolen, your freedom can be lost, men can even take away your good name. But what nothing and no one can ever take away from the Christian is the gift of eternal life. That is an inheritance that is sealed forever.

But all of these things are just so much nonsense to unbelievers. And that is why the question that Jesus asks Martha is so very important. He doesn't ask her, “do you believe in life after death” “do you believe in Angels” “do you believe in heaven and hell” “do you believe God” or even “do you believe in the resurrection” – Because even a YES answer to those questions isn't the key to salvation. You can believe in all of those things and not be a Christian. He asks do you believe that ***HE – JESUS – IS the resurrection and the life. That ANYONE who believes in Him, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die***

That's the Question He's Asking Martha, that's the question He's Asking You!

Do You believe that Jesus ALONE holds the Key to Eternal Life – Do You believe that He is the WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE and that NO ONE comes to the father but by Him?

Well praise God, Martha believed, she responds with the highest declaration of faith declaring that Jesus is:

LORD

That HE IS THE CHRIST – THE MESSIAH

THAT HE IS GOD THE SON

And THAT HE IS THE ONE WHO PROMISED BY PROPHETS, IMMANUEL GOD WITH US:

She uses the language of Psalm 118:26 - Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

Two Applications: First, Brothers and Sisters, in this also we should see their stubbornness of unbelief. Christ's last and greatest sign prior to his own resurrection was done in front of many witnesses from Jerusalem and virtually on the very doorstep of the Sanhedrin.

John 12:9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,

Have you ever considered that it was the death of Christ that saved the life of Lazarus, here as well? Why were they plotting to kill Lazarus? Because so many Jews seeing him alive from the dead believed in Jesus? But once they had put Jesus to death, they saw their troubles as over and no longer cared whether Lazarus lived or died.

This should once again prove to you, that evidence alone, without faith will never be sufficient to cause someone to believe. What is needed is that heart-changing work that only Christ can do. So if someone says to you, if there were more evidence I would believe, answer them *no you wouldn't*.

Second, Friends as I said earlier it is difficult to comfort the grieving, someday someone will come to comfort your loved ones.

I recently wrote a note to a friend who was grieving the sudden death of her husband. Whose husband recently died, they had thought it was pneumonia, it turned out it was cancer. He never felt any pain, suffered any ill-effects until two weeks before he died. He never even knew he had cancer. The Lord was very merciful to him, but his wife while grateful was still grief-stricken.

But brothers and sisters, because both she and her husband also knew the Lord the way Martha knew Him I was able to send her the following quote from Samuel Rutherford knowing it to be the truth: ***“Dearest [Sister], go on and faint not. Something of yours is in heaven, beside the flesh of your exalted Savior; and you go on after your own. Time's thread is shorter by one inch than it was. An oath is sworn and past the seals, whether afflictions will or not, you must grow and live and triumph and reign and be more than a conqueror. For your Captain who leadeth you on, is more than a conqueror, and He maketh you partaker of His conquest and victory.”*** - Samuel Rutherford

You may today believe in God and Life After Death, but will someone like me be able, in truth, to comfort your loved ones with those same glorious promises? How will they if you do not believe in the *source* of eternal life? Friend to be without faith in Jesus is to be without life. But to believe in Him is to Have Life Everlasting. *Do you believe this?*