

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #218

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead Jesus Tells Martha... "I AM the Resurrection and Eternal Life"

JN 11.17-27

17 On his arrival, Jesus discovered that Lazarus had already been lying in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem. 19 Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had only been here, my brother would not have died. But you were not here! 22 Yet even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

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

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, *"I AM the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will have eternal life, even though they die; 26 and whoever has eternal life by believing in me will never die... forever. Do you believe this?"*

27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I have come to permanently believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Bethany, near Jerusalem
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	B. Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead
Title	3. Jesus Tells Martha: "I AM the Resurrection and the Life"

COMMENT:

Today's reading contains Jesus' fifth "I AM" statement contained in the gospel of John: ***"I AM the resurrection and the life."*** (11.25) This declaration was coupled with another super-powerful promise from Jesus regarding the certainty of our eternal salvation in him. John 11.25-26 is one of the most important texts in the fourth gospel. We will give it our attention later.

Martha rushed to meet Jesus in a state of shock. She left her younger sister, Mary, behind at home to tend to the many guests who had arrived from Jerusalem to comfort the sisters. This indicates the prominence of this small family, and allows us to understand the powerful impact this miracle made in Jerusalem when it was reported to the Pharisees.

Martha's statement to Jesus was probably the most heart-wrenching thing he heard in his whole life. In the original Greek, Martha comment was made in a conditional grammatical form that indicated the condition was

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #218

contrary to the actual facts, and was therefore hypothetical. When she said: *"If you had been here, my brother would not have died..."* -- Mary was politely implying to Jesus that "you were NOT here, Lord!" I have added those words in my translation to make this point clear, because Martha intended Jesus to understand her words in that way when she chose this grammatical form.

Since Jesus chose not to arrive in Bethany in time to heal Lazarus--he chose to remain several more days in Perea--as far as Martha was concerned, Lazarus' death was Jesus' fault. Martha was laying the responsibility for her brother's death squarely at Jesus' feet. It is actually quite amazing that Martha felt the freedom to say such a thing to Jesus. It indicates how much she trusted him, and how secure she felt in his unconditional love.

If this were not enough, when Mary came to meet Jesus after Martha, she repeated the same polite accusation to him (11.32). It is no wonder that later on in the narrative, John described Jesus as being *"deeply moved and troubled in spirit,"* to the point of weeping (11.33-36).

Even though Jesus knew from the beginning that he would ultimately raise Lazarus from the dead, he still felt the pain and shock of Martha and Mary as his own pain, and identified with them in their sorrow. He did not get angry with them for questioning his timing, or blaming him for their brother's death. Jesus selflessly identified with their anguish and grief, even though he knew it was temporary.

Please do not skip over John's portrait of Jesus' love in this passage. Even the Jewish leaders who hated Jesus would end up saying: *"See how he loved him"* when they saw Jesus' tears. Yet they only knew a small portion of what was really going on. This interchange between Martha, Mary and Jesus gives us one of the most poignant insights into the humility and love of Jesus to be found anywhere in the gospel.

In this circumstance of having a shattered heart, Martha spoke out one of the greatest confessions of personal faith in the gospels (11.27). She had come a long way since she was unable to hear him speaking in her own home, less than six months earlier (LK 10.38-42). Martha made one of the greatest "comebacks" in the New Testament.

Jesus made his magnificent fifth "I AM" statement in this context as well: ***"I AM the resurrection and the life."*** Resurrection and eternal life are not "things"-- they are are a person: Jesus. If you have a relationship with Jesus, you have eternal life in him, because he will resurrect you from the dead.

Jesus had already made the claim to be able to resurrect himself (JN 2.18-21), and every person in history--instantly and simultaneously (JN 5.21-29). Because Jesus has God's own quality of life that lives forever in himself, he is the resurrection for all who die physically. He used the Greek grammatical form of "emphatic negation" again here (11.26) to give us the utmost assurance of eternal life.

The promise of eternal life is our comfort when we grieve over the physical death of those we love. It is not just a platitude. Jesus himself spoke out the encouragement of the certainty of eternal life as his comfort for Martha in her grief. If this promise and "I AM" declaration was Jesus' choice for grief ministry to those he loved so much, it is the best kind of encouragement for all of us who grieve, too. Jesus' promise of eternal life is not mere words--it is truth spoken in love.

APPLICATION:

The apostle Paul followed Jesus' example for grief ministry. He described it well in I Thess. 4.13-18.

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #218

*will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.
18 Therefore encourage one another with these words. (NIV)*

How can you personally take comfort in these words of Jesus, and Paul?

Who can you encourage with these words?