

John 11a verses 1-27

1 Jesus knew this family well (3,5). He often stayed the night in the home when He was in the area. Gethsemene may have been their olive grove. Luke 10:38-42 Lazarus is the same as the name Eleazar – God is my help. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, verse 18.

2 See 12:3 – There are several stories of perfume and hair used to dry feet. One was by this affluent woman, Mary, the other by a woman of ill repute. (Luke 7:37-38) Perhaps John mentions ahead of time here to remind us of the love and respect Mary had for Jesus.

3 The sisters knew of a special friendship between Jesus and Lazarus. He is your special friend too. Note that they did not ask Him to come. He needed only to say the word. The sisters thought certainly if Jesus know He would cause Lazarus to be healed. Where is Jesus? 10:40 He may have been staying in the city of Kochaba. We have no Biblical evidence for this, but we have historical information that this city on the other side of the Jordan had some of Jesus distant relatives, for like Nazareth, the descendants of David lived there. The records of Davidic lineage were kept in that city. It would match with the distance mentioned later (compare 6 and 17).

4 He did not say it would not pass through death, but not end in death. The end result would be glory to the Son of God. Everything will glorify Him in the end. When God is glorified, the Son is glorified and vice versa. 13:31-32 To Jesus, the cross was the way to glory. 12:23 Going to raise Lazarus would set up the scenario that would lead to His crucifixion (53). Jesus is willing to pay the price to rescue His friends.

5 Jesus loves us! Every individual can know that He allows in our lives the things that will draw us closer to Him. Through tragedy, He is about to help them understand more deeply, who He is and all that He means to them. 15:9

6 He could have said the word and Lazarus would have been healed. He allowed them to go through this painful time to make the lesson even clearer. He would pay a greater price for this wait than they did. That is always the case. Isaiah 55:8-9

7 –8 They had just fled to the other side of the Jordan because of threats on His life (10:39). Jesus knows His days are numbered and that the Passover is drawing near (Matthew 16:21).

9-10 There is a fixed time for all things. Jesus had to complete His mission in the time allotted Him by the Father. Jesus is the Light of the world. As long as He is with them, they can follow without fear. Soon He will be taken from them, but He will send the Promise of the Father. 12:35

11-14 Remember that Jesus said the Jairus' daughter was sleeping (Mark 5:39). It seems Jesus used this term for those who would rise. The Apostle Paul follows this tradition (1Thess 4:14-15). Jesus had to make things simple, almost as if He was translating into terms we comprehend because we are so worldly minded.

15 Everyone is grieving, but Jesus knows it is best. Do you think this scenario repeats itself in our lives? We think the worst thing has happened, but God is not worried. He knows what we need to help us believe.

16 Did Thomas hear Jesus? The eternal pessimist must have made himself miserable. How grand of him to offer to die with Jesus, but what will happen when Judas brings the mob? We often think we are ready until things get serious.

17-19 Jesus and His disciples make the trip and find friends and relatives there to mourn with the family. The Jews thought it was very important to do the things that God did, and God comforts the sorrowful. In the funeral procession, all who were able joined in. No one was to speak idle words to the immediate family as they walked between two lines of mourners. They returned to the house for a memorial meal of eggs and lentils. For seven days the mourning continued. The first three days were for weeping. No work was to be done. You were not to put your shoes on or do any type of studying or even wash yourself. This was followed by thirty days of lighter mourning. It was in the midst of this week that Jesus came, right after the three days of weeping. Eccl 7:2

20-22 Martha is the take action sister, while Mary tends to sit still. She immediately expresses her disappointment that Jesus was not there. God can handle our expressions of doubt and discouragement. Then she speaks faith and hope that Jesus is still able to do something.

23 –26 We should be comforted that those we love will rise again. Martha says, "I know, but that is too far away." Martha has a more progressive faith than most Jews of her day. (6:39 –40) Jesus answered her that He is the resurrection and the life. He doesn't just have the power to raise and give life, He is resurrection and He is life itself! 5:21 To believe in Him is to have eternal life and not die the second death, even after the first death. Do you believe it? Really believe it? He may have been referring to spiritual life of new convert. The spiritually dead believe in Him and are given a life that never dies, even when their body dies. Romans 5:18

27 She believes He is the Messiah, the Son of God that was prophesied. 1John 5:20

Jesus said "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered: "I know quite well that he will rise in the general resurrection on the last day." Now that is a notable saying. One of the strangest things in scripture is the fact that the saints of the Old Testament had practically no belief in any real life after death. In the early days, the Hebrews believed that the soul of every man, good and bad alike, went to Sheol. Sheol is wrongly translated Hell; for it was not a place of torture, it was the land of the shades. All alike went there and they lived a vague, shadowy, strengthless, joyless ghostly kind of life. This is the belief of by far the greater part of the Old Testament. "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in Sheol who can give thee praise?" ([Ps 6:5](#)). "What profit is there in my death if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise thee? Will it tell of thy faithfulness?" ([Ps 30:9](#)). The Psalmist speaks of "the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom thou dost remember no more; for they are cut off from thy hand" ([Ps 88:5](#)). "Is thy steadfast love declared in the grave," he asks, "or thy faithfulness in Abaddon? Are thy wonders known in the darkness, or thy saving help in the land of forgetfulness?" ([Ps 88:10-12](#)). "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any that go down into silence" ([Ps 115:17](#)). The preacher says grimly: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going" ([Ecc 9:10](#)). It is Hezekiah's pessimistic belief that: "For Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness" ([Isa 38:18](#)). After death came the land of silence and of forgetfulness, where the shades of men were separated alike from men and from God. As J. E. McFadyen wrote: "There are few more wonderful things than this in the long history of religion, that for centuries men lived the noblest lives, doing their duties and bearing their sorrows, without hope of future reward."

Just very occasionally someone in the Old Testament made a venturesome leap of faith. The Psalmist cries: "My body also dwells secure. For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" ([Ps 16:9-11](#)). "I am continually with thee; thou dost hold my right hand. Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory" ([Ps 73:23-24](#)). The Psalmist was convinced that when a man entered into a real relationship with God, not even death could break it. But at that stage it was a desperate leap of faith rather than a settled conviction. Finally in the Old Testament there is the immortal hope we find in Job. In face of all his disasters Job cried out:

"I know that there liveth a champion, Who will one day stand over my dust; Yea, another shall rise as my witness, And, as sponsor, shall I behold--God; Whom mine eyes shall behold, and no stranger's."
([Job 14:7-12](#); translated by J. E. McFadyen).

Here in Job we have the real seed of the Jewish belief in immortality.

It is true that in the days of Jesus the Sadducees still refused to believe in any life after death. But the Pharisees and the great majority of the Jews did. They said that in the moment of death the two worlds of time and of eternity met and kissed. They said that those who died beheld God, and they refused to call them the dead but called them the living. When Martha answered Jesus as she did she bore witness to the highest reach of her nation's faith.

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