

John 11:17-37

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

17 Jesus arrived after the three days of weeping, but still in the first week. Friends and family would still be gathered to comfort Mary and Martha, but for the typical Jew, all hope for a miracle would be gone.

18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off,

18 If someone died, the word would quickly spread. It was considered a righteous act to console the grieving family so most of those in the village and even friends from nearby cities would stop work and come to mourn with the family for most of the week.

19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

19-20 Remember, Martha is the one who was busy serving (Luke 10:40), and Mary was the outgoing one who sat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39; John 11:45). Perhaps Mary was surrounded by friends and did not hear about Jesus arrival, but Martha was accessible. She would have run down the road bare foot, her face stained with tears.

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

21 Surely the sisters had witnessed Jesus perform healings. Martha's first words express her confusion at why Jesus had not come immediately. She could not understand why someone who loved her and her brother so much would not drop everything and run to her side. But she went on to voice incredible faith in verse 22.

22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

22 It is the fourth day. The spirit is thought to have departed, but Martha held out hope that with Jesus, anything was possible. "Even now", even after four days, even after decomposition has set in, God will do whatever You ask! That is rare faith indeed.

Some of you watched Breakthrough, a true story of a boy who had drowned and been underwater for 20 minutes and then CPR for 27 minutes before they gave up. His mother cried out to God and he came back to life without brain damage. God is the same God today. He doesn't always do what we ask, but when it is His will, He still does miracles. Knowing what we know about science, would you still say with Martha, "I know that whatever you ask of God He 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 on the last day."

23,24 She knew of His promise to raise those that believe in Him (John 5:28,29). She just implied that He could raise her brother even now, but this statement from Jesus might mean someday in the future. She wanted to clarify, so she stated her belief in the future resurrection.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

25 Jesus' response is one of the most profound statements ever uttered. It was another of His "I am" declarations. *"I am the resurrection and the life."* Most of the "I am" declarations had to do with Him being the life giver, (Bread of Life 6:35; Light of the World 8:12; The Gate 10:7; the Good Shepherd 10:11; The True Vine 15:1) but in this one, Jesus declares that He is the Life that He gives (John 10:28). He gives Himself. Jesus' response to Martha's faith was to reveal more of Himself to her. That was one reason He delayed coming.

25b,26a First, Jesus affirmed her declaration of a coming resurrection but added why it was true. Faith in Jesus is the prerequisite for resurrection of the redeemed. It is what guarantees your body will live again with Him (John 6:40), because He is life, and He gives us Himself. That life is not quenched by physical death. Then He addressed the present reality: faith in Jesus means you have life that cannot be taken from you, not physical life, but spiritual life. Lazarus was still alive spiritually. He had life from the time he first believed in Jesus, and he is still experiencing that life. If you believe in Jesus, you have life that is everlasting, because Jesus is everlasting life within you.

26b The big question! Do you believe that people will receive their body back from the dead because they believe in Jesus? Do you believe that faith in Jesus means you have life that no one can take from you, life everlasting, now and forever? The implication was that all of that applied to Lazarus. Jesus was consoling her with a dose of reality. When we are grieving over some loss or great pain in life, we often need to ask ourselves what we believe.

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

27 Martha believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. She believed He is the Son of God, but that is not exactly what Jesus was asking. He was asking if she believed Lazarus' relationship with Jesus meant that he would one day see his body raised and was even now in possession of life.

28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

28-32 This is the exact same thing that Martha had said only Martha followed it with a statement of faith. Mary did not. It makes me wonder how many times they had voiced that complaint to each other. "Where was He? Why did not He come? Surely He could have healed him?"

What things we say when we feel God has not heard us! I am amazed at some of the things that come from the lips of us Christians. "Where is God? I have suffered long enough! Why does not God do something?" It is as if He had not done the greatest work of all for us already! We talk as if we had never been recipients of grace. What do you

think that sounds like in the ears of the One who died for you? He is working in you the same thing He was working in Martha and Mary, a greater understanding of who He is, which means a deeper relationship, increased faith, a maturity that is not shaken by the circumstances in this life.

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

33 To be moved (NIV) or groan (KJV) is a word that means “to snort in anger, or to have indignation on” “The second word, troubled (*tarasso*), is literally ‘troubled himself’ (*etaraxen heauton*). So perhaps a better translation would be, ‘became angry in spirit and very agitated.’” All that weeping, much of it a show, was to say to the family that you really cared. That bothered Jesus. It troubled His spirit. As we read the English translation it seems like He is just mourning with them. That is not the case. He is angry at their distortion of what is happening. Physical death is not the end (1 Corinthians 15:55).

34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept.

34,35 The word for “weep” here is silent tears streaming down the cheeks, not wailing as the others were doing. The question is why? Jesus knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He knows death is not the end. But He also knows the pain in the heart of Martha and Mary. He sees the chaos that sin has brought into the world and felt the pain of mothers who have lost a child or brother or husband. Sin causes pain, and that too breaks the heart of the One who weeps with us.

36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

36,37 It is like a wrestler taunting His opponent in derision. “Shouldn’t you have done something earlier?” And behind it is the voice of the Accuser, “You trusted the Holy Spirit and now look at all the pain.” Satan always accuses others of the destruction he creates. He destroys and then tries to get us to feel guilty about it (John 10:10). And in this corner, Jesus the Christ, Son of the Living God, The Word made flesh, Creator, Redeemer, King of kings and Lord of lords, Eternal One! Ding – this round will not last very long. Who is your money on? Really? Do you live like you have bet it all on Jesus? Do you live like you know He is the resurrection and the life?

Questions:

Why is “dead for 4 days” significant?

How did Martha voice doubt? Faith?

What does this “I am” declaration mean?

What were the implications of Jesus words to Martha? To you?

What was Jesus asking Martha to believe?

What was bothering Jesus? Why did He weep?