

# In The Beginning Was The Word

## John 11:17-37

### **INTRODUCTION: JESUS COMFORTS MARY AND MARTHA**

#### **Lazarus becomes ill and dies.**

When a loved one passes on, we may not always know where the destination of their soul may rest.

But assuredly if they had known the Lord, according to the scriptures then we would be comforted in their death.

But when we are not sure of their spiritual status, then our soul will be in anguish as we toil and wrestle with their spiritual blindness whilst they were still alive.

Then for those that we loved who we know did not turn to the Lord, we are grieved by their decision not to have followed after the Lord.

So if we really love our families, and we really loved our friends, we will spend time in trying to reach them for the Lord.

Lazarus and his family were secure in the Lord. But even so he was sorely missed on his departure from this earth.

When John wrote of Lazarus death he describes here for all believers just how they will be missed by their families left behind. Even though they knew Lazarus was secure in the Lord.

Just because a loved one dies, it does not mean that we won't miss them, and the times that we interacted with them.

## **John 11:17-37**

**<sup>17</sup> Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.**

1. A miracle would not be a miracle unless you could prove beyond doubt that the resulting outcome was by the divine hand of God.
2. This was going to be the case with Lazarus.
3. Jesus did return to see Lazarus, but when he did, **he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.**
4. The burial process had already been completed, and lifeless body laid to rest in the ground.
5. However the burial memorial service was to endure for 30 days in remembrance as in Jewish tradition out of respect and mourning of the person who died.

**<sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:**

1. Out of respect many Jews came from Jerusalem which was only fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem to pay their respects. (3kms).
2. So it was not very far for people to travel to pay their respects, especially for the Jews as was commanded by the Torah.

**<sup>19</sup> And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.**

1. To remember the death of a person was to celebrate their life.
2. In Judaism the death of a person was equally as important to remember as was their life.
3. But it was equally as important to remember those who needed to be comforted as a result of the loss of a loved one.
4. For this reason we see many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

## **Mourning**

Jewish mourning practices can be broken into several periods of decreasing intensity. These mourning periods allow the full expression of grief, while discouraging excesses of grief and allowing the mourner to gradually return to a normal life.

When a close relative (parent, sibling, spouse or child) first hears of the death of a relative, it is traditional to express the initial grief by tearing one's clothing. The tear is made over the heart if the deceased is a parent, or over the right side of the chest for other relatives. This tearing of the clothing is referred to as keriyah (lit. "tearing"). The mourner recites the [blessing](#) describing [G-d](#) as "the true Judge," an acceptance of G-d's taking of the life of a relative.

From the time of death to the burial, the mourner's sole responsibility is caring for the deceased and preparing for the burial. This period is known as aninut. During this time, the mourners are exempt from all positive commandments ("thou shalt"), because the preparations take first priority. This period usually lasts a day or two; Judaism requires prompt burial.

During this aninut period, the family should be left alone and allowed the full expression of grief. Condolence calls or visits should not be made during this time.

After the burial, a close relative, near neighbor or friend prepares the first meal for the mourners, the se'udat havra'ah (meal of condolence). This meal traditionally consists of eggs (a symbol of life) and bread. The meal is for the family only, not for visitors. After this time, condolence calls are permitted.

The next period of mourning is known as shiva (seven, because it lasts seven days). Shiva is observed by parents, children, spouses and siblings of the deceased, preferably all together in the deceased's home. Shiva begins on the day of burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day after burial.

I wanted to point out some of the importance from the Jewish tradition to show you how the Jews felt about life and death.

But look what happens when something more important takes place in the life of a Christian.

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

1. Whilst the Jewish ceremony of the dead was taking place, Martha saw life appearing on the horizon.
2. Martha had heard that Jesus was coming. To her it was far more important than a Jewish ceremony.
3. Jesus is life and in Him is life, and Martha knew that.
4. The scriptures here in verse 20 tell us that Martha left in such a hurry to meet Jesus that she even forgot to tell her sister Mary.
5. At this point Mary had no idea that Jesus was in town.

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

1. The first words out of Martha's mouth was one of desperation.
2. Those words were not selfish words, but words of sorrow and grief. **Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.**
3. If we had lost a loved one, and for those of us who have, perhaps these words are the words we asked our Lord. Why Lord? If only?.....these are words of sorrow.....and expresses out heart's desire to the Lord.
4. But even though Martha asked this question, Jesus knew her heart and he knew her grief. Jesus knew her physical loss of her brother.
5. And Jesus knows our pain in such times as well.
6. Yes, Jesus may not have let Lazarus die physically then, but death is no challenge to the Lord.
7. And here a miracle and a conversion of others looking on would take place despite of Lazarus's death.

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

1. Despite Martha's request to the Lord, she never doubted that Jesus could present a better outcome.
2. Martha knew that Jesus was God, and was capable of everything.
3. Perhaps in this question and confirmation of her belief she was aware that Jesus was going to bring Lazarus back to life.
4. Perhaps it was this confirmation she shared with the Lord **But I know, that even now,**
5. **whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.**
6. Was her faith, now stronger than ever? It sure seems that way.
7. Was it her faith that persuaded others also to follow after Jesus?

**<sup>23</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.**

1. Well we see here for sure, that those questions we proposed as Martha quoted in verse 22, are true.
  2. Jesus read her in the same way.
  3. Only the Lord was saying it from both an eternal perspective and a now physical perspective. **Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.**
- **Daniel 12:2** <sup>2</sup> And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

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

1. Martha's own question left he also a little bewildered.
2. Yes she did know that Jesus would raise him up in the resurrection at the last day.
3. But she was totally taken back by the way Jesus answered her question.

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

1. We have the same perspective as Martha.
  2. We know that Jesus will one day raise all the believers up who believed in him.
  3. But like Martha we fail to sometimes see that "Jesus is the resurrection".
  4. **I am the resurrection, and the life:**
  5. The important message that Jesus was conveying to Martha and that he is now conveying to us is this "**he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:**"
  6. Because without Jesus there is no resurrection unto him. Yes there will be a resurrection but that will be unto damnation.
- Jesus had told the Jews earlier in his preaching the result of not believing.
  - **John 5:29** <sup>29</sup> And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

**<sup>26</sup> And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?**

1. Sometimes even as a believer we have to still challenge ourselves with what we believe.
2. We find that even though Martha was a believer Jesus still asked her that same question.
3. Perhaps it was to reassure her of her faith, or perhaps it was to reassure her of Lazarus faith that he had in the Lord.
4. But what a comfort anyhow to hear Jesus reaffirm salvation is only in him if we would believe that.
5. And that was the question he asked Martha. **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.**

1. Martha's belief was reassured by her.
2. She Jesus was the Son of God.
3. She knew Jesus was the Christ that the scriptures spoke of.
4. And she knew now that he had come into the world.
5. **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.**

1. It must have been at that point that she remembered that she had forgotten to tell her sister that Jesus was here, because we find Martha dropping everything again to call her.
2. **she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.**
3. Did Jesus call for Mary? It does not say here. But I think in all the excitement of her Lord being there Martha told her sister that Jesus is here and is calling for you.
4. As a believer Martha knew that Mary like her was a believer and would want to see Jesus right away, as opposed to be stuck in a house cleaning.

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

1. As soon as Martha told Mary that Jesus was here, **she arose quickly, and came unto him.**
2. Mary knew Jesus also to be the Son of God the Savior of the world.
3. Who was more important to Mary or Martha? Obviously Jesus was. They placed him in greater esteem even over the mourners in their household.
4. To these ladies, Jesus was greater than all tradition, even over burying their own brother.

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

1. As Jesus was still outside of the village at Bethany he got to see both Martha and Mary.
2. Maybe it was because the Jews were at Lazarus house and maybe they would have been a hindrance to him at this time. The bible does not say.
3. But all in all it was very close to their house and to the burial site of Lazarus.

**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.**

1. It was customary for the mourners to comfort the family in question.
2. So as Mary went off they followed her.

3. Their immediate thoughts were that she was going back to Lazarus grave to mourn for him.

**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.**

1. An expression of Mary's belief was that to worship Jesus.
2. By falling at his feet she was placing herself at Jesus mercy.
3. But it was also an act of a plea.
4. Mary as did Martha, they both saw Jesus as their ultimate help in a merciful time of need.
5. They both called on Jesus to help them.
6. They both said to Jesus that if he had been with them, their brother Lazarus would not have died.
7. Both of them showed their faith in Jesus.

**33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.**

1. But what Jesus was not happy about was the trail of Jews that had followed them.
2. The weeping of Mary was genuine, but the weeping of the unbelieving Jews with Mary caused Jesus to as the scriptures says, "**he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.**
3. Jesus knew the hearts of the Jews was not the same as the heart of Mary.
4. Perhaps this is the reason why Jesus stayed on the outskirts of the village of Bethany as to not get involved in the Jews that had rejected him.
5. We can't say, but what we can say is that **he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.** When he say them.

**34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.**

1. Although Jesus groaned in the spirit and was troubled, he never chased any of them away.
2. Instead he asked **Where have ye laid him?**
3. From there they went to show Jesus where they had laid Lazarus to rest.

**35 Jesus wept.**

1. He we see Jesus share an emotion with us.
  2. This was an act of weeping for his friend. Jesus invoked an emotion that all those who looked on could see. Including those unbelieving Jewish mourners.
  3. Perhaps Jesus also wept because of their unbelief.
  4. But definitely it tells us that Jesus had compassion.
- **Romans 12:15** <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

**36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!**

1. Even the Jews saw how much Jesus had loved Lazarus as a true and good friend.
2. More importantly as a believing friend in God.

**37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?**

1. To some or perhaps many Jews present Jesus was nothing but a miracle worker.
2. Because they still referred to him as "**Could not this man**".
3. Even though some of these Jews had seen the miracle of the blind man able to see again. They did not look to Jesus as God.

- But this is nothing new to the Jews. (John 9:6-7)
- This is the same question that was asked by the Richman in Luke 16.

**Luke 16:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

<sup>20</sup> And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

<sup>21</sup> And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

<sup>22</sup> And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

<sup>23</sup> And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

<sup>24</sup> And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

<sup>26</sup> And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

<sup>27</sup> Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

<sup>28</sup> For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

<sup>29</sup> Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

<sup>30</sup> **And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.**

<sup>31</sup> And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

- Even though Jesus would rise from the dead they would still not believe.

PRAYER.....CLOSE