

## I. John's final story to prove Jesus' deity

A. John 11:16-27 . . . Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." [17] So when Jesus came, He found that [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days. [18] Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; [19] and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. [20] Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. [21] Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] 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 on the last day." [25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" [27] She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

## B. Pray

## II. Leaving

A. (John 11:16 . . .) Jesus had left Jerusalem and its surrounding areas because the religious leaders had tried to stone Him and were out to kill Him. However, upon hearing that Lazarus was sick, He decided to return to Lazarus' hometown of Bethany – which was just under two miles from Jerusalem.

1. When the disciples understood that Jesus was intending to return to an area where the religious leaders were wanting to kill Him, they urged Jesus to rethink His plans.
2. But once Jesus made it clear He was going to Bethany, regardless, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."
3. It appears Thomas did not understand what Jesus had been talking about in relation to Lazarus' death, and it appears Thomas still lacked insight into Jesus' way of thinking and His submission to the will of God. However, Thomas did not lack for courage and allegiance.

4. And though this same Thomas doubted the other disciples when they claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead, when he did come to his senses, his first words were, "My Lord and my God!" – which are words that demonstrate his submission and allegiance to Jesus (John 20:28).
  5. There is no one in this room who has gotten this far in life without sinning and making some foolish mistakes. None of us is esteemed as being an excellent theologian, and no one here is a published Bible expositor. But all of us can excel at Christian courage, humble submission, and allegiance to God and His son, Jesus Christ.
- B. John 11:17-19 . . . So when Jesus came, He found that [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days. [18] Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; [19] and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.
1. The custom of the day was to bury the deceased the same day they died, and then for family, friends, and associates to sit with the bereaved person or family for six more days. Hence the group of Jews who were still there when Jesus arrived.
  2. Now it is probable none of the Jews who wanted to kill Jesus would have anything to do with Martha and Mary since it was known that these ladies and their brother were friends of Jesus.
- C. John 11:20-22 . . . Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. [21] Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."
1. Martha was convinced that Jesus had the power to heal her brother's sickness. AND she was convinced that even though Lazarus was dead, Jesus could ask God for some remedy or relief or some other solution, and God would do it.
  2. We are not told what Martha was thinking Jesus should ask of God, but it seems clear from her response to Jesus when He asked for the stone to be removed from the tomb that she was not thinking of Lazarus being raised from the dead right then and there.
  3. We read her response down in vs 39, "Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.' Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.'

4. I see an important truth in this part of the story that I would like you to see.
    - a. It is easy – when faced with hard times – to believe that God could have done something to prevent it. And once you are in the midst of the hard time it is equally easy to believe that God could do something to make things better or easier. Yet it is quite foreign to our way of thinking and therefore hard to believe that God will bring a good that is far greater than immediate relief from the loss or suffering – so as to patiently wait for Him to bring about the greater good.
    - b. In the same way, it is easy to think of things that God should have done or could still do now that the troubles and suffering have come. But if a period of time passes where nothing happens according to what we think God could and should do, it is hard to patiently trust Him and remain confident that the good He eventually brings will be far greater than the loss caused by the trial or tribulation.
    - c. When we think and believe in these ways, we are prone to show our distrust and disappointment with God by taking matters into our own hands, and in so doing, miss out on the far greater good God wanted to bring us all along.
  5. Therefore, we see that Martha had thought about and held a number of theological truths. And we see that she had a strong faith. But both her thinking and her faith went only so far.
    - a. After that, her thinking became limited and her faith grew weaker – even though it was the same God she knew about, and believed in, and trusted.
    - b. Is this true of you? Though your thinking is good and your faith is strong – does it only go so far? It need not be this way, for just because you do not have all the answers or do not see God acting as quickly as you would like or in the ways you think best, you still can believe with a confident trust that God knows best and is in the process of bringing about a greater good than you can imagine.
- D. John 11:23-26 . . . 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." [25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

1. (Vs 23-24) 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."
  - a. Martha knew her theology. She was confident that the dead will rise again one day, which is the day we refer to as the second coming of Jesus Christ.
  - b. But theology aside, Martha's response to Jesus about Lazarus rising again is an example of that tipping point between what she thought God could or would do and what God actually can and will do – if He wills to do it. AND her response is an example of that tipping point between her strong faith and her weak or even lack of faith.
  - c. My point is – Martha was confident Lazarus would rise again on the last day, but she did not believe he could rise right then and there.
  - d. Is this not like many of us. We confidently believe in the saving power and grace of Jesus Christ and just as confidently believe we are going to heaven after we die.
    - (1) However, we do not believe that God's way of meekness is better than anger and aggression when we are being mistreated.
    - (2) And when we are not being loved the way we want to be loved, we do not believe that continuing to love as God says we are to love is better than pulling away or doing other hurtful things to send the message that the other person better start loving us in the ways we want to be loved.
  - e. Do you see the truth in this? Thinking in godly ways is important, and trusting God is vital. But what matters most is that our godly thinking and faith go the distance so that regardless of the circumstances, we think right thoughts about God and trust God to bring about a greater good than we can imagine.
2. In response to Martha's statement that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life;
  - a. Now remember, Jesus is God incarnate, which means He is the source of resurrection and therefore the One who brings forth any and all resurrections from the dead. And in the same way, He is the source of life and therefore the One who brings forth life.
  - b. Jesus affirmed this truth back in John 5:21, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes."

- c. In other words, as a human, Jesus had the God-given, Spirit empowered ability to give life and restore life should someone lose their life – physically or spiritually. But as God in human flesh, Jesus is life itself and resurrection itself. This is why He could lay His life down and take it up again (John 10:18).
3. I want to stop here and take a few minutes to talk about Jesus being life. Here in John 11:25, Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” And we read in John 1:4, that in Jesus is life, and the life is the Light of men.
- a. Now it is true that the life Jesus gives is eternal, but it is not a life that begins after you die or at the second coming of Christ. The life Jesus gives begins when you repent and are born again. And it is this life that enables you, here and now, to become a new creature, and enables you to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, and enables you to be transformed in your thinking, and enables you to become holy in all your behavior just as He is holy.
    - (1) Therefore, when we repent, are born again, and proceed to put off our old nature and the sins of our flesh – and at the same time proceed to live according to the teachings of Jesus and according to the will and word of God, we progressively enter into and experience the reality of this life.
    - (2) And as we make our way further and further into this life, we begin to clearly see and comprehend and understand why the life Jesus gives is true life, and we begin to experience the abundance of this life.
  - b. And in like manner, it is as we grow in this way that we clearly see, comprehend, and understand that sin has only one goal – to steal from us what is genuinely valuable, to kill our faith in God and love for God, and to destroy us in whatever ways it can in this life and in the life to come. As Jesus so aptly said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
  - c. You see, it is one thing to know the right words and another thing to comprehend and experience – in very personal and practical ways – the truth of those words. Without question, the life Jesus gives includes knowing the right words, but it equally includes applying that knowledge to how we live so that we come to that place where we comprehend and in very practical ways experience the truth of those words.

- d. It is in this way that Jesus is life, and it is in this way that we touch, taste, and in every other way experience the life He gives.
- 4. Returning to vs 25, Jesus continues by saying, “he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.
  - a. Jesus conveys two truths in this statement.
    - (1) First, if we will believe in Jesus we will continue to live even if we die.
    - (2) Second, every living being who believes in Jesus will never die.
  - b. In other words, for those who believe in Jesus, death is not the end of life but the transference of life from one realm to another.
- E. Jesus concludes His statement to Martha with these four words: “Do you believe this?” This is a challenging question, for it goes to the heart of the Christian life. And because of this, I want to spend some time considering Christian faith.
  - 1. The scripture says that God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45).
    - a. This means that faith in God is NOT required to share in the blessings of such things as sun, rain, seasons for planting and harvesting, oxygen, gravity, reproduction, the joy of parenting, love, and much, much more.
    - b. All these things are available to everyone whether they believe in God or do not believe in God.
    - c. We know from life experience that faith in God is not required to heal from such things as broken bones, cuts, bruises, cold viruses, flu bugs, food poisoning and the like. We also know that unbelievers, including avowed atheists, have been cured of cancer and other terrible diseases.
    - d. Unbelievers have enjoyed meaningful relationships, and life-long, loving marriages. They have raised children to be responsible, caring adults. They have sacrificed for the good of their family, their community, and the nation. And they served on school boards, served in charitable organizations, given away money, and sought to make life better for the less advantaged.
    - e. My point is, there are many good things we can enjoy and beneficial things we can do for the good of others which are not dependent on faith in God.

2. However, the writer of Hebrews says that without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).
3. In other words, without faith in God you will neither recognize nor give God praise and thanks for His creation and its beauty, His presence, His goodness, His faithfulness, His provision, and His protection.
  - a. Without faith in God, you will not worship and revere and treasure and love Him.
  - b. Without faith in God you will not humble yourself in His sight, submit to His will and word, seek to please Him in your thoughts, choices, and behavior, put off the old nature, put on Christ-likeness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, love your enemies, bless those who persecute you, refuse to return evil for evil, and do your part to be at peace with everyone you know and deal with.
  - c. Without faith in God you will not seriously read, pray to understand, embrace, and apply all of scripture to all of your life.
  - d. Without faith in God you will not trust God in the hard times and patiently wait for God to bring a good that is far greater than relief from sickness, sorrow, tribulation, and suffering.
  - e. Without faith in God, you cannot enter into eternal salvation, or be reconciled to God, or receive the Holy Spirit, or be set free from the enslaving power of sin, or be empowered to live a godly life.
  - f. Without faith in God you will not receive the blessings and rewards God's bestows on those who believe in Him and live according to His will and word.

### III. Conclusion

- A. And this list could go on – but for the sake of time I want to end with this question: “Do you believe this?” I am not asking if you believe that those who believe in Jesus will live even if they die.
- B. I am asking if you believe that thinking and living according to God's will and word – in the most practical ways possible – is the only way that works in this world, whereas all other options are either of no benefit to anyone or else they lead to some form of destruction and death.
- C. May we be among those who can whole-heartedly answer the question, “Do you believe this?” with, “Yes, I believe it!”