

The Death of a Friend

Key Verse: “*When he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*”
—John 11:43

Selected Scripture:
John 11:38-44

involved a family of Jesus’ special friends, and the mighty power of God which was displayed on their behalf. It is one of the most touching events recorded during the period of our Lord’s earthly ministry.

Turning to the Gospel of John, chapter 11, we immediately recognize this experience as having to do with the death of Lazarus, who, along with his sisters Mary and Martha, were close friends of Jesus. Mary and Martha had previously rendered service to him at their home in Bethany, and it was Mary who would later anoint Jesus with costly ointment. (Luke 10:38-42; John 12:3) Now, however, their brother Lazarus was sick. They sent for Jesus, hoping he would come quickly and heal him, as he had done in so many other cases during his ministry. Upon hearing the news about the illness of his friend, Jesus, testing the faith of Mary and Martha, delayed two days before coming to Bethany. Finally, knowing that Lazarus was now dead, he said that he would go and “awake him out of [the] sleep” of death.—John 11:11-14

WE HAVE ALL BEEN

blessed in life by having special friends. Jesus also had several close companions, whom he loved greatly. On some occasions, especially at those times when he would travel to Jerusalem, he stayed in the home of his beloved friends. Our lesson for today recounts an incident

When Jesus arrived and saw Mary weeping, he asked, "Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see." Then, in a touching display of his sympathy and love, the account says "Jesus wept." (vss. 33-35) He wept, not only because of the sorrow surrounding the death of a close friend, but also on account of his personally witnessing the effects of the curse of sin and death which was upon mankind. (Gen. 2:17; 3:16-19; I Cor. 15:21,22) Jesus then reassured Mary and Martha, saying, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" The stone was taken away from the place where Lazarus was laid. Lifting up his eyes, Jesus said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," in acknowledgement of God's power, giving all praise and glory to him.—John 11:40,41

The words in our Key Verse spoken by Jesus resonate yet today—"Lazarus, come forth." "He that was dead came forth," quickened by God's power. (vs. 44) This was not a "resurrection" in the full sense of its meaning. Lazarus later fell asleep in death once again, this time to await the resurrection which would come when all "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Indeed, Jesus said, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth."—John 5:25,28,29

The Apostle Paul refers to the mighty power of God which was exercised to raise Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him to his right hand. He told the brethren at Ephesus that he was praying for them, that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened to know the hope of their calling and "exceeding greatness" of divine power which had been exercised in the resurrection of Jesus. This same power, he says, is available to "us-ward who believe." (Eph. 1:17-22) It is because the eyes of our understanding are enlightened that we are able to look at the things "which are not seen," those which are "eternal," in the heavens.—II Cor. 4:17,18 ■