

The Resurrection and the Life

Key Verse: “*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*”
—John 11:25

Selected Scripture:
John 11:1-27

NEAR THE END OF HIS

earthly ministry, Jesus received a message from Mary and Martha of Bethany that their brother Lazarus, a dear friend of the Master’s, was sick. After waiting two days, until Lazarus had died, Jesus proposed returning to Bethany in Judea. However, his disciples were concerned for his safety, because his enemies had sought

to stone him.—John 11:1-8

Our Lord foreknew all the circumstances regarding his visit to Bethany. He indicated he would proceed with his plans. In doing so, Jesus understood fully that the miracle he intended to perform would further disconcert his enemies.

When Jesus finally reached Bethany, Martha went out to greet him in the midst of her sorrow and probable disappointment that he had not arrived earlier. “Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”—vss. 21,22

In response, Jesus affirmed that her brother Lazarus

would rise again. (vs. 23) In pointing Martha's mind to the resurrection, it is important to note the Lord did not say that Lazarus was not really dead. The general understanding among all believing Jews at that time was the hope of a resurrection at some future day which was to be accomplished by divine power. (vs. 24) This is an important message which believers should proclaim at this time as well, especially in view of the prevalent human theory that the dead are more alive than ever.

The scriptural viewpoint of death is simply that it is the cessation of life. The Bible explicitly states that the dead know nothing. (Eccles. 9:11) Were it not part of the divine plan that Jesus would provide the ransom price for Adam and, ultimately, the entire human race, death would be an eternal condition from which there could be no hope for release.

The Key Verse explains that our hope for life is lodged in Christ. The only means by which all the dead are to be awakened and attain to life is the ransoming power of his atoning sacrifice. This is true whether it be for the church during this Gospel Age, or for the human family at large during God's Kingdom.

The climax of this lesson was realized when Jesus demonstrated why he had not traveled to Bethany prior to the death of Lazarus. "When he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."—John 11:43-45

If the raising of Lazarus convinced many of the Jews as to what divine power could accomplish on that occasion, think of all the rejoicing that will occur when God's kingdom is established, and similar miracles occur on a worldwide basis.—Isa. 35:10 ■