

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 11:18-19

vs18-19: Bethany was a small un-walled village situated on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. The road connecting Jerusalem to the region around the Jordan River passed through it. By the time Jesus arrived, the grieving ceremonies for Lazarus were well under way. The first three days after a person died were the most intense (weeping); then the remainder of that first week was less intense. Those who were mourning didn't wash, put on shoes, study or engage in business, but some form of mourning continued for an entire month (Alfred Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, E.R. Herrick and Co., CA 1890, Vol.2, p.320; Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson, 1995, p.160). That this family was highly respected can be seen by the fact that many religious leaders came out from Jerusalem to speak words of comfort to Martha and Mary concerning their brother. Their presence at the funeral was an honor, but it also made the sister's house a very dangerous place for Jesus. Some of those who came to mourn may have been members of the group who tried to seize Him in the temple (Jn 10:39).

John 11:20-22

v20: When Martha heard Jesus was approaching the village, she quickly went to intercept Him before her guests could discover that He was there. Meanwhile, Mary remained in the house, possibly because she was overcome with grief, but possibly to keep the guests in place so Martha could sneak out undetected. **vs21-22:** Martha said to Him, "Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died." It's possible to interpret her words as a scolding, that she was asking why He had delayed, but if Lazarus died shortly after the sisters sent the messenger on his way, then this statement was expressing only disappointment. Yet with her next breath she declared faith. She immediately added, "And [even] now, I know that whatever You ask God, God will give You" (literal). She appears to be responding to His earlier reply to their plea for help. He had told the messenger, "This sickness is not to death but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (literal) (v4). That statement meant "Lazarus won't die!" and yet Lazarus had died, so she may have been expressing hope that it was still possible for a miracle to bring her brother back to life.

John 11:23-25

vs23-24: Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again," to which she replied, "I know he will rise again in the rising again (resurrection) in the last day" (literal). Her statement was a confession of promises found in the Bible which say that the righteous will come back to life at the end of the age. For example, God told Daniel that those whose names are written in God's book, "who sleep in the dust of the ground," will awaken to everlasting life (Da 12:1-2). But at this point Martha's words do not appear to include much hope that her brother's dead body could physically come back to life at that moment. **v25:** Martha's confession was true. There will be a resurrection at the end of the age (Jn 5:28-29), but Jesus wanted her to understand that the raising of dead bodies and the giving of eternal life were not simply actions that He would someday perform; they were the natural result of who He is. So He said, "I am the resurrection (rising again) and the life." By that statement He was revealing to her the full meaning of what John wrote in the introduction to his gospel, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). Those words mean that Jesus is divine and that life flows out from Him. Therefore life is present whenever He is present, so there was no need to wait for a future event to raise Lazarus. The One who will someday raise all humanity from their graves was standing in front of her. He would call forth the dead at that moment, as surely He will call them forth later on (Jn 5:28-29).

John 11:25-26

vs25-26: To His statement that He is the resurrection and the life Jesus added, "And the one who believes in Me, even if he should die, he will live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will not die into the age" (literal). And then He asked her, "Do you believe this?" The first part of His statement is addressed to the person who believes in Him but then their body dies. That person is promised resurrection (standing again). Someday their spirit will be clothed with an incorruptible, physical body. The second part of His statement is addressed to the one who believes in Jesus and is still alive. He or she has no reason to fear death. Their spirit, the real person, never ceases to exist but simply steps into the presence of God.

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John 11:27

v27: Martha's answer to Jesus' question, "Do you believe this?" was "Yes, Lord," to which she added three statements, each of which declares Jesus to be the fulfillment of a key prophetic promise about Israel's coming Savior. The first term, "Christ" (Anointed One), refers to the promise that God made to David that he would have a son who would sit on his throne forever (2Sa 7:12-17). The second term, "Son of God," comes from a statement made in Psalm 2 in which God will declare the Messiah to be His "begotten Son" on the day He places Him on a throne on Mount Zion. At that moment God will give Him the authority to rule all the nations of the earth (Ps 2:1-9). Paul says that promise has already been fulfilled. It took place the day Jesus was resurrected (Ac 13:33). The third term Martha used was "the One coming into the world." Those words refer to the Prophet which Moses said would arise in Israel, and like Moses, would speak to the people with words that came directly from the Lord (Dt 18:15, 18-19; Mt 11:3; Jn 1:21, 25; 6:14).

John 11:27

v27 (continued): Jesus is, indeed, the fulfillment of each of these prophetic promises, but the question He asked Martha that day meant, "Do you believe that I can raise your brother back to life, now?" (paraphrase). She answered, "Yes, Lord," but only a short time later, when He commanded the stone to be removed from the door of Lazarus' tomb, she warned Him, "Lord, now he smells" (literal) (v39). That response indicates that she wanted to believe, but her faith was not strong. Moments later, as Lazarus walked out of that door, all doubt was gone instantly (v44).

John 11:28-31

vs28-31: After confessing Jesus in terms which were no less bold or definite than Peter's response at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked him, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16:15-16; "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"), Martha went back to the village to tell her sister that Jesus had arrived. She spoke to her secretly saying, "The Teacher is waiting just outside the village, and He asked that you come there" (paraphrase). Apparently when Martha first learned of Jesus' arrival she did not inform her sister but left her sitting in the house with the guests (v20). But as soon as Mary discovered that Jesus was there she quickly went out to meet Him. He was still waiting at the same place where Martha had met Him. It seems He wanted to speak to each sister without a crowd of mourners listening to their conversation, but when Mary rushed out of the house her guests followed thinking she was going to the cave, where Lazarus had been buried, to grieve.