

John 36 – Agony of Death and Disbelief in Messiah

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John 11:21-38

Picking Up the Threads

- Last lesson depicted the differences between the sisters
 - Martha - Matron of the wealthy house humbling herself, coming to Jesus, Her Teacher *and Master*
 - Mary - Remained seated in the house waiting for Christ to come to her: Position of authority *over Jesus*
- Faith of the women shaken by Jesus' allowing Lazarus to die and each responded {submitted} differently

Accusatory Statement of God

- ^A Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ^B But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."
Jo 11:21-22
 - Both women say the same statement to Jesus - ^A
 - Only Martha adds a statement of faith in Jesus - ^B
- Do you really believe God works all things for good?

Martha's Abstracted Faith

- Martha's statement of faith is more intellectualism than experiential; this is not wrong, only incomplete
 - She says that God hears Jesus and will grant Him whatever He asks (Is she asking Him to raise Lazarus?)
 - Christ says Lazarus will live again (Present)
 - Martha interprets this to mean Lazarus will rise on the last day with everyone (Future) (Lazarus remains dead)

Newish Eschatological View

- Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection as it was not in the books of Moses (To them) (Mt 22:23-29)
- Pharisees had varying degrees of belief in a resurrection but these were grounded in empty Talmudic traditions (Mt 23:1-10)
- Martha's statement shows even Jesus' eschatological teachings challenged Jewish beliefs (Mt 22:30-33)
Jesus' emphasis was not primarily about eschatology though He did lay the foundation for modern eschatology view such as Premillennial Dispensationalism (Mt 24:25)

Jesus is the Resurrection - Life

- Jesus expands Martha's resurrection statement
 - He is the source of all life: physical and spiritual (Jo 1:1-4)
 - Resurrection from spiritual death is only through Him
- Jesus separates death into two parts or phases
 - All are born spiritually dead; salvation is birth from above (Jo 3:3, 6-8; Ep 2:1-3)
 - Physical death required; body not made for eternity (1Co 15:42-57)

Does Martha Believe Jesus

- Jesus asks Martha if *she* believes He is the resurrection?
 - Martha affirms her belief but her actual belief is *different* from Christ's words; she heard herself, not Him
 - She answered that He, Jesus, is the Messiah Who is coming into the world (Opening Hymn) (Jo: 1:4, 9, 14, 18)
 - Martha struggles to leap from the abstract (intellectual) to the manifestation of God's power; as do we all...

This is not a slight against Martha but shows the limitation of human intellectualism unaided by the Holy Spirit, pre-New Covenant; explains the slowness of the Apostles also.

Jesus Calls for Mary

- Jesus sent Martha to call Mary to Him; notice the terminology used to Mary
 - Martha said, "The Teacher...", a title of authority
- Jesus' teaching of Teacher (Rabbi) *condemned* Pharisees
 - There is only One Teacher - Christ; believers are slaves to Him and on same level to serve each other
(Mt: 23:8-12)
 - Disciple can only hope to be like his Teacher, not above
(Mt: 10:24-25)

Even today Jews revere their Rabbis above God's word and men aspire to be known as great teachers of Talmudic tradition; i.e., philosophy

Mary Came to Jesus

- Thus, when Martha said, "The Teacher calls you," Mary had to make a choice
 - She could stay seated demanding Christ come to her
 - She could come and humble herself in faith (Worship)
- Jesus did not come to Mary - Peirasmos (πειρασμός) of her faith
 - She came and knelt (submitted) though struggling

Difficult Passage to Interpret

- Jesus saw Mary, and those who came with her, weeping
He was agitated in His spirit
 - This has been interpreted in various ways
 - He was upset over effects of death; however, He was about to raise Lazarus negating its effect
 - He was moved by the grief of Mary over losing Lazarus; again, He was about to resurrect him

Back to the Greek

- We cannot always rely on the vernacular word choices of the translators; they have their biases as do readers
 - Greek, ἐμβριμάομαι, means intense agitation
 - Greek, ταρασσω, reinforces troubledness of His spirit
- Why was Jesus so agitated? Look to the context
 - He was surrounded by people weeping over death
 - He was surrounded by people exhibiting lack of faith

Martha Came Closest to Faith

- Martha only person to exhibit faith in the power of Christ and she doubted Him raising Lazarus
 - After three years of teaching and the prospect of His death looming before Him, He was always confronted by lack of faith that grieved Him and the Spirit
(Jp 4:30, He 12:3)
 - No one believed He could overcome death, essence of any resurrection theology, though He had twice before

Why Did Jesus Weep?

- Jesus asks to be brought to Lazarus' tomb; He weeps
 - He is about to raise Lazarus so I doubt He is weeping over death (separation) which is under His authority
 - I believe He is weeping as He sees His tomb and the tortuous death which very shortly awaits Him
 - Also, Jesus constantly struggled to control His flesh which continually sought to rebel (sin) against God (Ge 4:6-7; Lk 22:39-46)

Response to Jesus' Weeping

- Bible clearly portrays the difference between what Jesus says and does against what people believe Jesus is saying and doing (1st 12:3)
 - Part of the crowd interpreted Jesus weeping as a display of love toward Lazarus death; however, this makes no sense as He is about to bring him out of the tomb
 - Part of the crowd cajoled; Jesus healed the blind man, could He not have kept Lazarus from death? [No]

Two Sets of Contrasts

- First contrast - Martha's faith versus Mary's petulance
 - These both believed in Christ as Messiah
 - Struggled to understand and submit to His decisions
- Second contrast - False belief in Jesus' love versus cynicism of Christ as Messiah
 - These two contrasts did not believe Christ as Messiah
 - They projected their lost views onto Christ's ministry

Eisegesis: Reading our beliefs into Scripture

Jesus Stands Before the Tomb

- Again, John describes Jesus' troubledness of spirit {ἐμβριμάομαι} as He stands before Lazarus' tomb
 - This reinforces my belief that Jesus is acutely aware of the terrible torture and agonizing death awaiting Him
 - He is troubled by lack of faith about Him as a restless sea vainly threatening to extinguish His light (Jn 1:5, 11:43)
 - Christ tempted to find *another way*; avoid the stauros

Tomb: Cave with a Stone

- John describes Lazarus' tomb as a cave with a stone over the opening
 - This is the burial of a wealthy man reduced to the state of all men
 - For the lost, this emphasizes the futility of life (Jn 6)
 - If there is no resurrection then the faith of the saved is empty and we are living lives of empty hope - Futility (1Co 15:12-19)

The Cave and Stone Door

- Lazarus, surrounded by immovable stone, appears trapped by death, forever bound by his sin
 - Jews are pictured as having *hearts of stone* because of their unbelief in God (Jn 8:25-27)
 - Everyone in this passage exhibits doubting hearts
 - God's metaphor for the New Covenant: He will change their hearts of stone to living hearts cleansed of sin

Plato's Cave Metaphor

- Plato's famous *Cave* metaphor in his book, *Republic*
 - Uninformed chained to face back of cave
 - View only *shadows* of things until mysteriously unbound
 - Slowly journey through cave until coming out into sun
 - Then goes back into cave to try and release others
 - In other words, futility, since one does not stay in sun
 - Man's philosophy at best is emptiness as Preacher said
(Ec 9)

Jesus' Death Very Near

- Jesus delayed to show the Father had power over death
 - If He could raise Lazarus from the dead via the Father
 - Then the Father could also raise Him from the dead
 - Ergo, *risen* Christ could raise believers from the dead
- Without New Covenant's indwelling Spirit, believers struggled to grasp Christ's teachings of the New Covenant; constant reminder of the flesh's limitations

Same Issues Today

- The saved and lost struggle with the same issues today concerning Christ's power
 - Many pray for Christ's intervention, seemingly in vain
 - Lost view this as *proof* that Christ does not exist
 - Saved find refuge in intellectualism as an explanation
- Jesus wants us to live in faith that His decisions, no matter how painful, are the best for us for eternity

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose. (Ro 8:28)