

I. Introduction

- A. Review
- B.

II. V.17 "Therefore Jesus, while coming, found him, already having in the tomb four days."

- a. Jesus was coming.
- b. Where?
 - i. V.30 "Jesus was still in the place Martha met Him"
 - ii. Where was that?
- c. Jesus had asked, "Where have you laid him?"
- d. Jesus was not at the tomb, but was near Bethany.
 - i. Notice also v. 32 "Where Jesus was."
 - ii. Jesus, apparently, was near Bethany, but not in the village,
- e. We would say that He was on the outskirts.
- f. Why?
 - i. It appears that Martha interrupted Jesus' descent into Bethany by going out to meet Him.
 - ii. Notice the participle.
 - iii. Jesus was coming, but Martha went out to meet him.
- g. What does this say about Martha?
- h. What does this say about Mary?
- i. Lazarus was in the tomb 4 days.
 - i. Significant?
 - I. Remember, Jesus had assaulted the Jews in Jerusalem during the feast of dedication.
 - II. At the end of that time, Jesus left Jerusalem and went away into the area where John the Baptist had been baptizing.
 - ii. During that time, Jesus was teaching.
 - iii. John 1:28 "Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing."
- j. From the time that Jesus was told that Lazarus was sick to the time that He arrived near Bethany was at least 4 days.
 - i. Jesus was told that Lazarus was sick-v.3.
 - ii. Jesus purposely waited two days longer-v. 6.
 - iii. From the time that the messengers were dispatched to the time that Jesus arrived, it would have been about 4-5 days.
 - I. Once they were dispatched, Lazarus died.
 - II. We would assume his death was immediately after being dispatched.
- k. Death in Jewish society was filled with superstition.

Certain signs were also noted as to the time and manner of dying. Sudden death was called “being swallowed up,” death after one day’s illness, that of rejection; after two days’, that of despair; after four days’, that of reproof; after five days’, a natural death. Similarly, the posture p 167 of the dying was carefully marked. To die with a happy smile, or at least with a bright countenance, or looking upward, was a good omen; to look downward, to seem disturbed, to weep, or even to turn to the wall, were evil signs.¹ On recovering from illness, it was enjoined to return special thanks. It was a curious superstition (Ber. 55 b), that, if any one announced his illness on the first day of its occurrence, it might tend to make him worse, and that only on the second day should prayers be offered for him.¹

At last a much-needed reform was introduced by Rabbi Gamaliel, who left directions that he was to be buried in simple linen garments. In recognition of this a cup p 169 is to this day emptied to his memory at funeral meals. His grandson limited even the number of grave-clothes to one dress. The burial-dress is made of the most inexpensive linen, and bears the name of (Tachrichin) “wrappings,” or else the “travelling-dress.” At present it is always white, but formerly any other colour might be chosen, of which we have some curious instances. Thus one Rabbi would not be buried in white, lest he might seem like one glad, nor yet in black, so as not to appear to sorrow, but in red; while another ordered a white dress, to show that he was not ashamed of his works; and yet a third directed that he should have his shoes and stockings, and a stick, to be ready for the resurrection!²

I. A normal funeral is illustrated in Luke 7:11-17.

A. Edersheim notes:

From the account of the funeral procession at Nain, which the Lord of life arrested (Luke 7:11–15), many interesting details may be learned. First, burying-places were always outside cities (Matt. 8:28; 27:7, 52, 53; John 11:30, 31). Neither watercourses nor public roads were allowed to pass through them, nor sheep to graze there. We read of public and private burying-places—the latter chiefly in gardens and caves. It was the practice to visit the graves (John 11:31) partly to mourn and partly to pray. It was unlawful to eat or drink, to read, or even to walk irreverently among them. Cremation was denounced as a purely heathen practice, contrary to the whole spirit of Old Testament teaching. Secondly, we know that, as at Nain, the body was generally carried open on a bier, or else in an open coffin, the bearers frequently changing to give an opportunity to many to take part in a work deemed so meritorious. Graves in fields or in the open were often marked by memorial columns. Children less than a month old were carried to the burying

I. ¹ Edersheim, Alfred. *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*. London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d. pp. 166-167

²ibid pp.168-169.

by their mothers; those under twelve months were borne on a bed or stretcher. Lastly, the order in which the procession seems to have wound out of Nain exactly accords with what we know of the customs of the time and place. It was outside the city gate that the Lord with His disciples met the sad array. Had it been in Judæa the hired mourners and musicians would have preceded the bier; in Galilee they followed. First came the women, for, as an ancient Jewish commentary explains—woman, who brought death into our world, ought to lead the way in the funeral procession. Among them our Lord readily recognised the widowed mother, whose only treasure was to be hidden from her for ever. Behind the bier followed, obedient to Jewish law and custom, “much people of the city.” The sight of her sorrow touched the compassion of the Son of Man; the presence of death called forth the power of the Son of God. To her only He spoke, what in the form of a question He said to the woman who mourned at His own grave, ignorant that death had been swallowed up in victory, and what He still speaks to us from heaven, “Weep not!” He bade not the procession halt, but, as He touched the bier, they that bore on it the dead body stood still. It was a marvellous sight outside the gate of Nain. The Rabbi and His disciples should reverently have joined the procession; they arrested it. One word of power burst inwards the sluices of Hades, and out flowed once again the tide of life. “He that was dead sat up on his bier, and began to speak”—what words of wonderment we are not told. It must have been like the sudden waking, which leaves not on the consciousness the faintest trace of the dream. Not of that world but of this would his speech be, though he knew he had been over there, and its dazzling light made earth’s sunshine so dim, that ever afterwards life must have seemed to him like the sitting up on his bier, and its faces and voices like those of the crowd which followed him to his burying.³

- m. As can be understood, a funeral was sacred enough to interrupt all of life in order to recognize it.
- n. As mentioned, when a funeral procession passed by, people were expected to join in the procession in order to mourn for the dead.
 - i. The family of the dead would precede the procession, and in some regions, the mother first.
 - ii. Jesus seems to have completely disregarded all these conventions.
 - I. He disregarded the processsion-v. 12.
 - II. He saw the mother's sadness and was moved to compassion, as opposed to focusing upon the dead-v. 13.
 - III. Instead of weeping with the professional mourners etc., He commanded her *not* to weep-v.13.
 - IV. He touched the coffin! - v. 14.
 - V. He stopped the procession by doing this - v. 14
 - VI. He spoke to the deceased - v. 14.
- o. Lazarus' death was, no doubt, similar.

³ Ibid. pp.170-171

- i. The very act of waiting the two days was enough to disrupt all that was normal.
- ii. A rabbi was expected to respond immediately to a call for the deceased and his accompaniment.

III. V.18 "But Bethany was near Jerusalem, as away from 15 stadia."

- a. This distance is important for the timing.
- b. It would be about 9,000 feet, with a stadium = 600 ft at the time.
- c. If a stride was about 2 feet, then it would have taken less than 1 day to travel from Bethany to Jerusalem.
- d. Jesus was beyond Bethany.
 - i. He was near Jerusalem, that is John's point.
 - ii. Again, Jesus was going right back into the fire where He was almost burned.

IV. V.19 "but many ones from the Jews came to Martha and Mary in order to console them concerning (their) brother."

- A. Again, those in spiritual leadership have a duty, even in that time, to console the widows and relatives of the deceased.
- B. Notice that many Jews came in order to console Martha and Mary.
 - 1. Indicates that Lazarus was not married.
 - 2. Also indicates that Martha and Mary were not married either.
- C. These were hired mourners, most likely.
- D. They were simply doing their duties.

V. V.19 "Therefore, as, Martha heard that Jesus came/was coming, she met Him, but Mary remained sitting in the house.

- A. Martha made the effort to go meet Jesus.
 - 1. It would seem that messengers came to them and let them know that Jesus was near and coming.
 - a) *However, Mary remained in the home.*
 - b) *Martha, now, is playing the part of Mary.*
 - *Mary is now worried and bothered by the recent events.*
 - 2. Martha went out to meet him
- B. This means that Jesus was not in town.
- C. It also means that their meeting was private.
- D. The meeting was that of Jesus being stopped by Martha who hurried to go meet Jesus.

VI. V.21 "Therefore, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if ever you were here, (then) my brother would not have perished."

- a. Martha's weakness is here.
- b. Can you blame her?!!!
- c. She understood that Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying.
 - i. Does this mean that she blames Him for delaying?
 - ii. Did she know about His delay?