

TONIGHT'S READING



THE NEED OF THE DEAD (2)

Scripture Reading:

John 11:20-26 ²⁰Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary sat in the house. ²¹Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You. ²³Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. ²⁴Martha said to Him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day. ²⁵Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live; ²⁶And every one who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever. Do you believe this?

John 11:39-44 ³⁹Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was deceased, said to Him, Lord, by now he smells, for it is the fourth day that he is there. ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? ⁴¹Then they took the stone away. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴²And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the crowd standing around, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. ⁴³And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! ⁴⁴And he who had died came out, bound hand and foot with cloths, and his face was bound about with a handkerchief. Jesus said to them, Loose him and let him go.

ALL PEOPLE BEING DEAD

Smelling

The second characteristic of the dead is that they smell. John 11 says that Lazarus was dead and also smelled (v. 39). When someone dies, he smells; that is, he has the odor of death. The odor of death is hard to describe, but it exists. There is an odor of death. If you come into contact with a dead man, you will smell the odor of death. Likewise, you may contact a person whose conduct, words, and expressions have a certain odor. This proves that he is dead. He is so dead that he smells. He has the fact of death and the odor of death. He has death, and he also emits the odor of death.

You may wonder why you cannot smell the odor of death. You cannot smell it because you also are dead. You also have the odor of death; hence, you cannot smell the odor of death in others. If you eat garlic and then contact others who eat garlic, you will not smell the odor of garlic. This is because you also have the odor of garlic. There are many obscene things in the newspapers and many disgusting advertisements, but people do not sense that these things are filthy; they cannot smell the odor of death in them. This shows that people are dead and are soaked with the odor of death.

Being Buried

The third characteristic of the dead is that they are buried. The Gospel of John says that Lazarus was buried in a tomb. After someone dies, he needs to be buried. To be buried means to be trapped in a certain thing and unable to get out. To be buried means to fall into a situation and to be unable to get out through one's own efforts. People in the world are buried in their lusts and addictions. Some are buried in their eating and drinking. Some are buried in fornication and gambling. These places are their tombs. Everyone has a tomb in which he is trapped and buried. What is your tomb? Are you also helplessly trapped in something?

Lazarus was dead and had been buried for four days. Some people, however, have been buried in their addictions for decades. Some people have been buried for half their lives in casinos and cannot come out. These situations prove that people are inwardly dead.

Being Bound

The fourth characteristic of the dead is that they are bound. The dead are not only buried, and they are also bound. The Gospel of John says that Lazarus was bound hand and foot with cloths in the tomb (v. 44). To be buried means that someone is trapped. To be bound means that someone is unable to move, having no freedom. If you want to know whether people in the world are dead, check whether they are free to move. People in the world are not free; rather, their whole being is bound. Some are bound by their lusts, and others are bound by their addictions. Regardless of the

kind of bondage, man has no freedom, and man cannot break away from the source of bondage. This also proves that man is dead.

THE NEED OF THE DEAD

These characteristics of death prove that man is dead. Let us consider the need of the dead. Do the dead need healing? Healing is useless. Do the dead need correction? Correction is also useless. The need of the dead is the resurrection life, because their problem is death. Healing cannot deal with death, and correction cannot deal with death. Only resurrection life can deal with death. Therefore, the dead need a life that can enter into and enliven them. This is the basic need of the dead.

When Lazarus was sick, his sisters sent a message to the Lord Jesus, hoping that the Lord would come to heal him. They asked the Lord to heal Lazarus. However, when the Lord Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He remained in the place where He was for two more days. Because of the delay, Lazarus had been dead for four days when the Lord arrived. The Lord Jesus delayed in order to show that His salvation raises people out of death instead of just solving their outward problems. For this reason He did not go to save Lazarus until he was dead. If He had gone to heal Lazarus, His salvation would not have been presented in a proper way. It would have meant that His salvation merely “corrects” people. Healing is in the principle of correction, but resurrection is in the principle of regeneration. To heal is to correct a problem; it is a matter of behavior. To resurrect is to give life; it is a matter of life. The Gospel of John presents eight cases to portray the principles of the Lord’s salvation. The greatest principle of the Lord’s salvation is to raise people out of death. Therefore, the Lord waited until Lazarus had died instead of healing him while he was sick. This shows that resurrection is the true need of those who are dead in sins.

The Lord’s salvation is to raise people from the dead, not to correct their problems. Hence, when Lazarus was sick, the Lord did not go to heal him. The Lord did not do anything. This means that if we merely acknowledge that we have problems but not that we are dead, the Lord will be unable to carry out His salvation in us. If we feel that merely our conduct needs to be corrected but not that we need the resurrection of life, the Lord will be unable to carry out His salvation in us. We must see that the Lord’s salvation is not to heal or correct us but to raise us from death and to give life to us. Our problem is not that there is something wrong with our conduct but that there is something wrong with our life. We are not only sick; we are dead. The need of the dead is to receive life in order to be resurrected. The only cure for death is resurrection life. Only resurrection life can eliminate death. The cultivation of one’s character and the correction of one’s conduct cannot eliminate death.

A funeral home modifies the appearance of dead people. However, a person is still dead, regardless of how much his appearance is modified. Makeup can be applied to him so that he looks very nice, but he will still be dead. A funeral home cannot bring the dead back to life or raise them from death. The work in a funeral home cannot solve the problem of the dead; that is not what the dead need. The dead need life and resurrection instead of modification and correction. Modification and correction cannot solve the problem of the dead. The problem of the dead is death. Only life and resurrection can eliminate death. Therefore, the dead need life and resurrection.