



By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

Scripture: John 11:20-27, 38-44

Lesson Background: The teaching in last week's lesson was delivered by Jesus sometime around the feast of Tabernacles, which was held in October. At that time Jesus had claimed to be the Good Shepherd who led His people to food and water and watched over them. He had also claimed to be the door by which all must come to God. These claims had met with mixed reactions from the Jews (John 10:19-21.)

Jesus eluded His would-be captors and went across the Jordan River to the area where John had first carried on his ministry. Jesus' reception there in Perea contrasted sharply with the treatment He had received in Jerusalem. Many of these people remembered what John had taught about Jesus and were moved to believe in Him.

In the meantime, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, fell seriously ill. The sisters sent word to Jesus, but Jesus delayed two days before starting back. By that time Lazarus was dead. As Jesus and the disciples started on their journey to Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem, Thomas, who was quite aware of the dangers, sounded an ominous note: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (11:1-16).

The Lesson

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask for."

"Your brother will rise to life," Jesus told her. "I know," she replied, "that he will rise to life on the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord!" she answered, "I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world (John 11:20-27).

Martha's first words were at once an outpouring of her pent-up grief and at the same time a hint of criticism. She spoke of a last opportunity. She undoubtedly knew about and perhaps had even witnessed some of Jesus' healings. She had no doubt that Lazarus could also have been healed if only Jesus had been there. If there is a bit of reproach in Martha's words, let us not be too critical of her. Most of us are apt to utter words from the depths of grief that otherwise we would not express.

The flame of hope may have been flickering, but Martha kept it alive. Martha refused to abandon hope completely. She may not have fully understood the power that Jesus had, but she was quite convinced that He had access to the power of God, which might even yet achieve the desired miracle.

Jesus turned Martha's thoughts about the past, what might have been, to the future, what was about to be.

Martha's answer reflected the fact that she had not caught the full impact of Jesus' words. Like most devout Jews of that day, she believed in a last day, a time of judgement. But her statement implied a subtle, wistful inquiry: "Do you mean he will rise at the last day? Or do you mean You will raise him from the dead now?"

The "I am the resurrection, and the life" in verse 25 is the greatest, the most inclusive of all Jesus' "I am's." Very dramatically it expresses the whole doctrine of the resurrection, which centers in Him. Though some Old Testament references to life and death are rather vague (Psalms 17:15; 49:15), a few seem quite clear (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2). In the period between the Testaments, belief in the resurrection and life after death came to be widely held. Based on the Old Testament, this growing faith was nurtured by the teachings of the Jewish scholars of the period. But now Jesus' affirmation gave it a firmer basis. Now they had first hand testimony—testimony that was about to be confirmed by the resurrection of Lazarus, and later confirmed by Jesus' own resurrection.

We live in different times when the intellectual currents are moving in a different direction. Deep in our minds we want to believe that there is something beyond this life, and yet the scientific and humanistic thought of our day casts a skeptical pall over such faith. But these doubts evaporate like the mists of morning beneath a bright sun when we allow Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life," to lodge in our minds.

Our culture has conditioned us to insist that every affirmation be supported by physical evidence. This critical attitude has served us very well in the scientific realm. It has freed us from many hindering superstitions and allowed us to bring many of the farces of the physical world under our control.

What works so well in dealing with material things has also been applied to the spiritual realm, and often with tragic results. Some, because they cannot see God with their physical eyes, have argued that He does not exist. They also conclude that because we cannot see beyond the grave then nothing exists beyond the grave. How tragic indeed!

None of us have firsthand experiences of life after death and so we must rely upon the testimony of those who have. Jesus claimed that He was the resurrection and the life. Of course, anyone could make such a claim, but Jesus backed up His claim with this tremendous miracle.

Such a resurrection after the dead man had been in the tomb for four days should have convinced anyone. Such a miracle should have convinced the most stubborn objector. But some refused to believe in spite of the physical evidence before them. Modern skeptics would be no more likely to believe if they saw such a miracle or a dozen such miracles today.

As Christians we believe that there is life after death. If we accept the Scriptures, we don't need any further proof of it. Indeed, the eternal life promised by our Lord will be more glorious than we can ever imagine. Amen.

Local Experts Agree

Stereotype Of Two-Year-Olds Often True

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

The "terrible two's." Are they really that bad? Patricia Heard, supervisor at the Center for Human Development, relates, "I think the stereotype is true because children are much more active by age two." She continues, "Most parents feel they can manage their children before then; at two, they can't control them as well."

Before that age, she states, children don't know to say they don't want to do something. At two, the child begins to feel his or her own power - the power to move, the power to say "no." Further, it is also at age two that children become aware of their own separateness. "They realize they can control their environment and their parents," Heard explains, "and they often say no to test their power, to see how far they can go."

Heard, who has nine years experience working with pre-schoolers in various settings, notes that toilet training often becomes an issue at around two. "I think because of some of the battles parents get into over this issue, they think it's a terrible time." She goes on to say, however, that how good or bad the time is, is based largely on how the parents set it up. If they approach toilet training in a positive manner,

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Patricia Heard
...Stereotype true



Carole Ricks
...From crawling to running

stressing that this is just something that children need to learn as they grow up, then fewer problems and fewer power struggles will result. "One good way for a child to get you," she points out, "is to wait until you have a house full of company and then stand in the middle of the room and mess in their pants." Some parents make the mistake of believing children should be toilet trained by a particular age, but not all children are developed enough physically. Not only is it a matter of a child's will; muscle development is also an important factor.

Social worker and counselor, Carole Ricks, of Ricks Resources, comments on typical two-year-old behavior. "They're in constant motion, always on the move," she remarks. "It seems they go from crawling to running, and then they walk."

Ricks recommends parents begin to set limits and spell out rules of acceptable behavior at about this age. While children are still too young to distinguish between truth and untruth at two, parents can begin to teach them what is real and

unreal, she notes.

"At two," Ricks states, "children begin to decide what to cooperate with and what not to. It's the beginning of their need to become individuals, to establish individual identities and a sense of self. This is often expressed in negativism," she comments. "As early as age two, they like to help around the house. Having them participate can give them a sense of achievement and help them feel good about themselves."

This is one of the things that

Carolyn Spivey, an experienced mother of four, does with her two and-a-half year old. "If I'm making biscuits," she relates, "I'll pull a chair over so Faith can be level with the counter. I let her help me." Other things that Spivey does include getting down on the floor with her daughter; using time-outs (sending the child to her room for a minute or two until she calms down); child-proofing rooms (putting away breakables, dangerous items, etc.); and suggesting puzzles or books to calm her down.

"Two-year-olds can't express themselves well, and this can be frustrating," Spivey points out as another reason for difficulties at this age.

It's important to remember that "two's" are just one step in a child's development, albeit an important step. When parents are having a hard time coping with their toddlers, Ricks suggests they call a nursery school for permission to visit and observe a group of two-year-olds. "This way," she explains, "they can begin to understand what all two-year-olds do. It gives them a better perspective so they can relax more with their own."

Notes Heard, "It's easier if parents know what to expect." Often, it's just the two-year-old's natural curiosity that means "trouble" for the parent.

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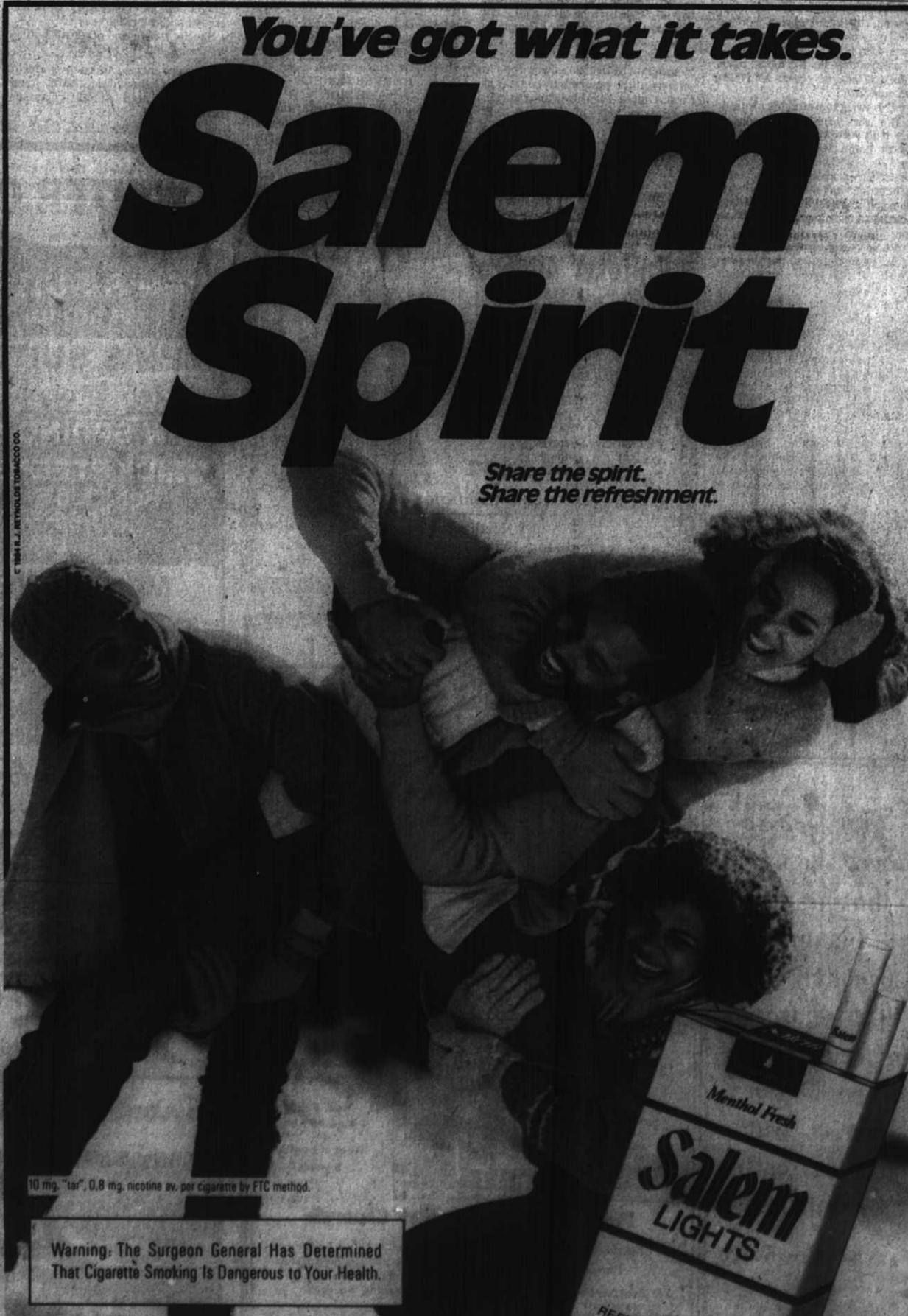
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