

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 12

John 11:1–57

Life After Death

At this point in the Gospel of John, we can see that it is written around the miracles of our Lord so that we might believe in Him. Looking back, we recognized Jesus' authority over nature when He turned water into wine (John 2). Then we saw His authority in evidence over all illness when He healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5). In John 6, we witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, where He symbolically presented Himself as the Bread of Life and walked on water. In John 9, we marveled at the opening of the eyes of a man born blind, and the unfolding truth that we too can behold the Light of the World.

John 11 presents one of the most poignant and powerful events in the life of Christ: the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Apart from the Lord's own resurrection, it is the greatest of Jesus' miracles. This miracle is the climax in revealing His identity as the Lord of Life. Here the reader deals with the truth about life and death—that which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. It is essential for us to grasp the truth that death does not have the final word—it is not the end. Jesus Christ is the Conqueror over death!

At a glance ~ **Read John 11:1–57.**

It is in this chapter that we reach a climax of the divided opinions over who Jesus is: through the raising of Lazarus, more come to believe in Him; but those who oppose Him will try to seize Him. As you read through the chapter in one sitting, think about the fact that God is there even when we cannot see Him working. What leaves an impression on you at first glance?

1. In the opening verses of chapter 11, we are introduced to a family who means a great deal to Jesus. Who are they and where do they live? v. 1

Bethany was located on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus had left and traveled about two day's journey to the Jordan where John the Baptist had first begun his ministry.

2. How do the two sisters refer to their brother in their urgent message to Jesus?
vv. 3–4

a. What is Jesus' response to the news?

What is most amazing about the Lord's response is that Lazarus was already dead. It had taken two days for the message to reach Jesus.

3. What insight are we given about Jesus' relationship with this family? v. 5

From the facts John records, we realize that during Jesus' ministry the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was a welcome refuge to Him. It must have been a home filled with warmth, fellowship and love—a place of joy and comfort.

Martha we know was a gracious hostess—no doubt the "Martha Stewart" of her day. She had the gift of hospitality, making people feel at home. John tells us that Mary, by contrast, was more concerned about the big picture—the issues of life—than she was the immediate business at hand. (Note: John apparently wants the reader to know that this Mary is the same Mary he writes about in chapter 12).

4. Rather than immediately return to Jerusalem, what does Jesus do? v. 6

A deliberate delay is not the normal response to an urgent request from a loved one; and yet, Jesus waited. He does the one thing a person would never do in such a circumstance—He waits. How must Martha and Mary felt about that and what must they have been thinking?

Selah ~

Why would Jesus wait? Have you ever found yourself asking this question? An emergency arises and you wait . . . and wait . . . and wait, but there is no answer from God. If you are waiting today in a holding pattern, let God minister to you as you trust Him with what seems like a delay. His answer will come, but it will come on His timetable—not yours! Look at Isaiah 55:8–9 for a moment. Note the encouragement you receive from these verses today.

Four days after Lazarus had died, Jesus tells His disciples they will return to Bethany (v.7). But this four day delay will serve to strengthen the faith of this beloved family and, in turn, serve to glorify God.

5. What is the disciples' response to this news that they will return? Why? v. 8

Verses 9–10 are difficult to interpret, as the words do not appear to fit the context of the story. Jesus may have been speaking of a typical work day of twelve hours from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., hours of daylight in which to do God's work. But moving about in the darkness of night is dangerous. As long as Jesus obeyed God, no one could lay their hands on Him until the appointed time. Remember, John is recording what he heard Jesus say first hand. *"These things He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I might wake him up' "* (v. 11).

6. Jesus knew that Lazarus had already died; what did He mean by these words?
vv. 12–13
- a. What did the disciples think He meant?

After earlier telling His disciples that Lazarus' sickness would not *be unto death*, Jesus now declares, *"Lazarus is dead"* (v. 14).

7. How does Jesus view this opportunity? v. 15
- a. How did one of His disciples, Thomas, see it? v. 16

In focus ~ (Key words) **Resurrection**

Look up the word using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance) and write a definition.

Resurrection: _____

Jesus is teaching that He is the Source—the beginning—of all life. Because of the sin of the human race, no one will possess life unless they are risen from the dead. Think about the new life you have been given through Christ!

Take a closer look ~ John 11:25

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’”

What does this verse reveal to you about the power and authority of Jesus? What does He promise *you* through His power and authority?

The Resurrection and the Life

Outlook ~ Read John 11:17–44.

Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived to perform the greatest miracle of His earthly ministry. John writes his account as if unfolding a drama. Jesus deals with each individual of the family He so dearly loves: challenging Martha's faith, Mary's sorrow, and restoring Lazarus to life.

As Jesus arrives back in Bethany, He finds that many of the Jews, friends and well-wishers, have arrived to comfort the two sisters (v. 19).

1. When Martha heard that Jesus had returned, she was the first to go and meet Him. Where was Mary? v. 20
 - a. What famous words does Martha speak to Jesus that she must have run through her mind countless times before He arrived? v. 21
 - b. What hope does she seem to hold in reserve for the future? v. 22
2. What declaration does Jesus make to this grieving sister? Does she believe Him? vv. 23–24

Jesus focuses Martha's attention off of her difficult circumstances and places it steadfastly on Him.

3. What startling statement does Jesus make?
 - a. v. 25

 - b. v. 26

Jesus declares that He is the Source of all life and challenges Martha (and every reader of John's gospel account) to believe in Him.

- c. What is her response? v. 27

 - d. Personal: What is *yours*?

In verses 28–37, Mary greets Jesus with the same words as her sister Martha, but her tone is full of weeping and pain. Jesus deals with them differently: Martha needed to exercise her faith; Mary needed to be comforted.

4. What position does Mary assume upon meeting Jesus? vv. 32–33
 - a. When Jesus sees her sorrow, how does He feel?

Jesus "*groaned in the spirit and was troubled*"—He was deeply moved with a righteous indignation about the tragedy of death; it is our enemy!

5. Deeply moved by this injustice, what does Jesus do? v. 35

The words of verse 35 form the shortest verse in the entire Bible, but how profound they are! The word used for *wept* in verse 35 is different from the one used to describe the weeping of Mary and the other mourners. The word used to describe Jesus literally means He "burst into tears," overwhelmed with grief.

6. What do the Jews observe about Jesus' reaction? vv. 36–37

7. Groaning within Himself as He approaches the burial cave, Jesus issues a series of commands. What is the first? v. 39

Martha protests and Jesus reminds her of His earlier words: "*Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?*"

- a. As the stone is rolled away, what does Jesus do? Why? vv. 41–42

- b. What is His second command? v. 43

- c. What is Jesus' final command? v. 44

Selah ~

Perhaps you are grieving a loss right now and your heart is breaking. Take your eyes off your circumstances and *fasten* them on the Lord Jesus Christ. Give Him your sorrows, your tears, your burden. Remember that He has the power to conquer over them. Don't focus on the darkness, but look to the One who is the Resurrection and the Life! Record your thoughts.

The Tragedy of Unbelief

Outlook ~ **Read John 11: 45–57.**

Some of the Jews present the day Lazarus was raised believed in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life, but some did not. Those that did not believe went away and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. Witnessing a man being raised from the dead was not enough for them; they willingly chose to oppose the one who held life and death in His hands.

1. The Pharisees called a meeting of the leadership council to discuss what to do. What did they fear? vv. 47–48

In the providence of God, the high priest, Caiaphas, becomes the channel of divine revelation and unintentionally makes a prophecy describing the death of one man for all (vv. 49–52). In looking back, John records for his readers that Caiaphas prophesied the death of Jesus for the Jews, Gentiles and the world, gathering everyone together into the one flock Jesus described in John 10. The end was bearing down on Jesus and the disciples.

2. How does John record this turning point in time? v. 53

a. What does the increased pressure from His enemies cause Jesus to do? v. 54

In the remaining verses of chapter 11, we see that the time of Passover was near. The end of Jesus' public ministry had come. He now sought refuge in the town of Ephraim, north of Jerusalem. The Jews have made their decision: Jesus had to die. In doing so, they become the unwilling instruments of God's plan in which He will redeem the world through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. Jesus knows what lies ahead shortly for Him. He will soon tell His disciples in John 12:23, "*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*"

What can we take away from these verses that John takes care to record? Perhaps the lesson for us here is that we need to recognize the times in which we live and know that God is still present, working out His plan and using His people to accomplish it. Wouldn't it be better to realize this so that we don't become unwilling or unwitting instruments as Caiaphas and others were? He has given us the mind of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to think and act as His representatives. Close your time of study in prayer, asking God to help you exercise the mind of Christ in whatever circumstance you are facing. Note what He ministers to your heart.

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you've learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes