

Jesus and Lazarus John 11

1 - The Gospels give us 3 accounts of Jesus raising the dead –

- a) The widow's son at Nain – Luke 7:11-17
- b) Jairus's daughter – Matt 9:18-26
- c) Lazarus – John 11:1-44

2 - All the previous six signs lead up to this one – the last of Jesus's miracles - the resurrection of Jesus.

It sets the stage for Jesus's own death – John 11:47-53 - *So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."* ⁴⁹ *But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* ⁵¹ *He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.*

3 - There are 27 personal interviews in John. Once again, we are faced with the reality of Christ's compassion.

This chapter occurs after Jesus's discourse about the Good Shepherd. It is the application of that teaching.

First: The Certain Death 1-3

Barclay – There is no parallel whatever for the raising of a man who had been dead for four days and whose body had begun to putrefy

Clarke – (Quoting Grotius) – The other three evangelists wrote their histories during the life of Lazarus.

John identifies Mary for us so that we will know of

- Her love for him
- His love for Lazarus – 5 - and for the sisters

Lazarus = GR/Eleazar = *God is my help*

Mary and Martha did not ask Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. Knowing that he loved Lazarus, they simply told him.

Second: The Certain Delay. 4-6

- a) Lazarus was already dead when He said, *“this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”*
- b) Jesus redefines death – He takes a door and turns it into a doorway
- c) But everything we know thus far makes v 6 startling – a two-day delay

Sorrow is prolonged for the same reason Jesus delayed. It is of divine use.

- d) 8 – Then his decision to return to Judea is startling too

Jesus could just have easily raised Lazarus from a distance. It is another instance of intimacy.

- e) 9-10 –. God has predetermined our days.
 Nothing can shorten our time.
 There is enough time for everything that needs to be done.
 We only have a certain amount of time, and it should not be wasted.
 Just as certainly as the day is, the night will be.
 No harm could come to Jesus by day but his night of passion was coming.

Third: A Certain Definition 11-15

- a) 11-13 – Jesus defines death as sleep
 - Kings - “He slept with his fathers” (for instance, see 1 Kings 2:10; 2 Kings 8:24; 2 Chron. 9:31). I
 - Jesus said Jairus’s daughter was asleep – Matthew 9:24
 - Luke said that Stephen fell asleep – Acts 7:60
 - Sleep is temporary
 - Sleep is restorative
- b) 14 –
 - * 14 - Jesus’s joy for our deaths
 - * 15 – What God does in death, as with everything, he does not simply for us but for others.

f) 16 – Thomas’s faith – “Let’s die with Jesus.”

Fourth: A Certain Disappointment 17-22

a) 17 - Jewish superstition said the soul stayed near the grave for three days and that, after four days, there was no hope of resuscitation

Jesus postponed His return until there would be no hope for, or explanation of, a resurrection by any means other than a direct intervention of God.

b) 19 – This is community

c) 20 – Mary remains seated – overcome with grief

Is it simply that Martha is the more active of the two? Is it because she is the one who gets things done, while Mary likes to sit (Luke 10:38-42)? Maybe. Or maybe there is something else going on?

Clarke - *“It is likely that by this circumstance the evangelist intended to convey the idea of her sorrow and distress; because anciently afflicted persons were accustomed to put themselves in this posture, as expressive of their distress; their grief having rendered them as it were immovable.”*

d) 21 – Martha’s disappointment

e) 22 – Martha’s faith

Martha does not know the end of the story but she knows it is not the end of the story

All’s well that ends well.
If it isn’t well, it isn’t the end.

Daniel 3:17-18 - *If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”*

Luke 22:42 - *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.*

G. Campbell Morgan - *Death was no stronger in His presence than disease, but these did not realize this. They would think of Death as the unconquerable. With disease men may grapple, and fight, and often overcome. But in the presence of death they are helpless.*

Spurgeon - *Some prayers would be all the better if they were shorter — all the better if they did not so much declare our own will as declare our confidence in the good will of Christ. I like the omissions of Martha’s and Mary’s prayer.*

Fifth: A Certain Declaration 23-27

a) V 23-24

When we say that we will see our loved ones again, we never mean, 'immediately.' But Jesus did.

b) 25 - Jesus is the resurrection

We have to pray about the resurrection. Jesus IS the resurrection.

Because Jesus is the resurrection, departed believers are never unconscious. Death cannot kill a Christian, it can only usher us into a different, higher form of life.

ILL – C.S. Lewis defined this transition in Mere Christianity.

a) *Bios* life is natural, physical life

b) *Zoe* is spiritual life.

It's like transforming tin, toy soldiers into real people. All tin soldier knows is that you are changing him – from tin to flesh - and it hurts. It's for this reason that he resists. He doesn't want to 'die,' and he doesn't know what the future looks like.

How did God solve this? A real man entered into our tin world. He was everything God intends us to be, and we get to watch, see, understand this life by reading the Gospels. IN so doing, God demonstrates the life he has for us and removes our fear about the transition.

c) 25b-26.

d) 27 – It is faith that unites us to this life

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit...

v 9-10 - As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Sixth: A Certain Defeat. 28-32

a) 28 – Did Martha call Mary secretly so she could have private moments with Jesus?

b) 32 – Mary repeats Martha's declaration but...

She says, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died," but she doesn't say, "But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (22).

This is the difference between grieving without hope, which looks to the past, and grieving with hope, which looks to the future.

Neither Martha nor Mary knew that the story would end with a resurrected Lazarus but Martha knew that Jesus could do *something*.

Seventh: A Certain Demonstration. 33-37

- a) 33 – Jesus is deeply moved by our sorrow
- b) 34 – He turns his attention to Lazarus
- c) 35 – Why does Jesus weep?

Weeping = wailing

Wept = grief

Isaiah 53:3 – *He was.... a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*

His grief is different than ours:

- Abraham wept when he buried Sarah
- Jacob wept when he wrestled with the Angel
- David and Jonathan wept together
- Hezekiah wept over his sickness
- Josiah wept over the sin of his nation
- Jeremiah was the weeping prophet

But there are no tear like those of Jesus -

- He sorrows for sin – He alone knew what it was like before sin and He alone knew what it would be like after sin. This disparity causes great grief.
- He sorrows for us
- He sorrows for Lazarus
- d) 37 – We ask the same question.

Spurgeon – *Does Omnipotence always exert its power? Does it ever exert all its power?*

Our only answers are that

- God loves us
- He has entered our sorrow
- His life rescues us from death

Eighth: A Certain Deliverance. 38-44

44 – The difference between

- salvation (“*came out*”) and
- sanctification (“*Unbind him, and let him go.*”)

Ninth: A Certain Defiance. 45-53

53 - *So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.*

Conclusion:

1 - The raising of Lazarus points to Jesus’ resurrection and demonstrates that the world is not simply a closed system of cause-and-effect principles, physical constants in the universe that sustain the laws of nature, biologically determined processes, or socially engineered conventions agreed upon by the human species. Instead, our universe is an open system where miracles are not only possible in history but occur as history.

2 – The raising of Lazarus points to the certainty of our resurrection (Phil 3:20-31; Ro 8:11; 1 Cor 15:23, 54-57)

3 – The raising of Lazarus points to God’s power to transform history’s greatest injustice – the crucifixion of Jesus - into the greatest good.

4 – The raising of Lazarus points to God’s ability, willingness, and plan to resurrect all creation (Gen 2:15; Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:19-20; Ro 8:19-23).

5 – The raising of Lazarus points to a new orientation – future – looking up and leaning into the future (Col 3:1-4).

Application:

John Calvin - *We are taught by this delay on his part, that we ought not to judge of the love of God from the condition which we see before our eyes. When we have prayed to him, he often delays his assistance, either that he may increase still more our ardor in prayer, or that he may exercise our patience, and, at the same time, accustom us to obedience.*

Applying John 10 and the Good Shepherd:

1 – 3b - *The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

2 – 7 - *Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.*

3 – 11 - *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*