

JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scriptures for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

The final miracle of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John had special significance. First, it was the most dramatic of all His miracles in that He raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the grave for four days (11:17). Second, it was done for the glory of God in that the Son of God would be magnified in His last days (11:4, 40). As a direct result of this miracle, many believed on Him (11:45; 12:11). Third, it corrected some errors which His disciples had of Him because they had misunderstood His message (11:11-14), His motive (11:5) and His mission (11:16). Fourth, it dramatically taught His followers that He was the literal resurrection and the life (11:25, 26). Fifth, it solidified His opposition and brought it to a climax (11:47-53).

The fact that Jesus wept was, no doubt, for more reasons than for sympathy. He wept for the total havoc that sin had brought into the world and for the blindness it wrought in people's hearts and minds (11:35, 38). By raising Lazarus from the dead Jesus proved He would be the Victor over the death of believers and wipe away their tears.

I. The Misunderstanding of Jesus — 11:1-37

A. The Actions of Jesus — 11:1-16

11:1 — Jesus and His disciples were welcome guests in the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, who lived in Bethany (cf. Lk 10:38ff). This was a favorite family of Jesus. At this time Jesus and His disciples were about a day's journey from Bethany when Lazarus became deathly sick.

11:2 — "Mary" - There are several women in the Bible with the name of Mary, but this one later anointed Jesus with expensive and fragrant oil - cf. 12:3.

11:3 — Mary and Martha decided to send a messenger to Jesus to tell Him about Lazarus' sickness. They made no request for Jesus to come; they simply wanted Him to know of Lazarus' illness and let Him decide what needed to be done.

"Love" — *phileo* is an emotional, affectionate love. Jesus felt this kind of love for Lazarus.

11:4 — "Not unto death" — Jesus told His disciples that the purpose of Lazarus' sickness was not about his death (that would not be the final result of this sickness), but the purpose of his sickness was for the glory of God so that the Son of God might be glorified.

11:5 — "Loved" - *agapao*: a divine, sacrificial love. Jesus also had this deeper kind of love for Martha, Mary and Lazarus (contrast. v. 3). He would make any sacrifice necessary to help this family.

11:6 — After Jesus received the message of Lazarus' sickness, He waited two more days before He told His disciples that He was going back to Bethany. Lazarus died shortly after the messenger was sent to Jesus and it took him a day to arrive at the place where Jesus was. Jesus waited two days before He started his trip to Bethany and it took Him a day to travel back to Bethany. This would make it four days after Lazarus' death (see v. 17). By waiting four days to raise Lazarus, it would have a greater effect on the people, since they thought the spirit of a dead person would remain with the body for three days. Raising Lazarus on the fourth day would bring greater glory to God and would show the authority He gave to His Son.

11:7-8 — When Jesus told His disciples they were going back to Judea, they became

concerned for His safety. The Jews were trying to kill Him in Judea.

11:9-10 — "Walk in the day" - This is a figure of speech for living in the light as God is in the light doing His will (1 Jn 1:7). It was God's will for Jesus to go back to Judea. The safest place in the world is to be in God's will.

"Walk in the night" — This figure of speech teaches that a believer is walking outside of God's will where he or she will stumble in the darkness and fall into sin.

11:11 — Jesus was going to awaken Lazarus, that is, raise him from the dead.

11:12-13 — The disciples misunderstood Jesus and thought He meant Lazarus was physically sleeping. They thought sleep would be good for him and felt it was unnecessary for Jesus to see him. He would recover from his sickness.

11:14-15 — Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, but this was allowed to develop their faith.

11:16 — Thomas' pessimism shows here. He thought that if they went to Judea with Jesus, all of them would be killed with Him.

B. The Arrival of Jesus — 11:17-37

11:17 — Lazarus had been dead four days - enough time to prove he was truly dead.

11:18 — Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem and about a day's journey from the place where Jesus and His disciples were (cf. 10:40).

11:19 — According to custom, many had come to comfort Mary and Martha concerning their brother's death.

11:20 — Martha went to meet Jesus when she heard that He had come. Mary stayed in their house.

11:21 — "If You had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha was not blaming Jesus, but showed her faith in believing that Jesus would have healed her brother had He been there. However, she knew that was impossible since Lazarus died shortly after she and her sister had sent a messenger to tell Jesus about Lazarus' sickness.

11:22 — "Whatever You ask of God, God will give it to You." Martha believed that even now Jesus could do something to help them in their time of sorrow and need.

11:23-24 — "Your brother shall rise again." This was Jesus' first promise to Martha that He would raise her brother from the dead now, but she misunderstood it. She thought that Jesus was referring to the future when her brother would be raised in the resurrection of all believers.

11:25 — "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus told Martha that He had the power to resurrect and give life to people.

"He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" — Since her brother was a believer, though now he was dead, Jesus plainly promised Martha a second time that he shall live. He was not talking about some time in the future, but he shall be raised and live in the present time.

11:26 — "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Here Jesus was giving Martha another promise, this time about spiritual life. Death causes a separation that is the result of sin. Physical death brings a separation of the body from the spirit of a person. Spiritual death is the separation of a person's spirit from God. The physical separation is removed in the resurrection. The spiritual death is removed as soon as a person believes in Jesus as His Savior;

he or she will never die, that is, be separated from God. Believers have everlasting life. Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" Did Martha believe her brother would be raised from death now? And did she believe she would never be separated from God? She apparently believed she had eternal life, but she did not believe her brother would be raised that very day.

11:27-28 — Martha reaffirmed her faith in Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, Who had come into the world. Then she returned to her house to tell Mary that Jesus had come and called for her.

11:32 — "(Mary) fell down at Jesus' feet" — Mary quickly left her home to meet with Jesus. When she saw Jesus, she worshipped Him and said exactly the same words as Martha had said about His ability to heal her brother, if He had been there. She was not accusing Jesus for not coming in time to heal her brother because she knew her brother had died shortly after the messenger had been sent to tell Him of her brother's sickness.

11:33 — "Weeping" — Mary and her friends were weeping and moaning over Lazarus' death. No doubt some were wailing as the custom was at that time.

"Groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" — Jesus was deeply moved by the bereavement and sorrow which sin had caused people. All have sinned and death is the result of sin.

11:35 — "Jesus wept" — He truly showed His sympathy and concern for these people.

11:36-37 — The Jews realized that Jesus loved Lazarus but could not understand why He had not kept him from dying and, thus, spared Himself of this sorrow.

II. The Miracle of Jesus — 11:38-44

A. Jesus' Command — 11:38-39a

11:38-39a — He commanded that the stone that covered the opening of the grave be removed.

B. Martha's Doubt — 11:39b

11:39b — Martha's former faith momentarily wavered. She doubted that Lazarus could be raised because he had already begun to decompose. But that is what Jesus Christ is going to do in the day of resurrection. He will raise all the dead believers before He reigns on earth for a thousand years so they can reign with Him (Rev 3:21). He will raise all the dead unbelievers after His millennial reign to be judged at His great white throne (Rev 20:12-15).

C. Jesus' Purpose — 11:40

11:40 — Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead to show Martha the glory of God as He had promised.

D. Jesus' Prayer — 11:41-43

11:41-42 — Jesus' public prayer was for the benefit of the people that they might believe He was sent by God the Father.

11:43 — "Cried with a loud voice" — The people could hear Jesus pray. By doing this they would not confuse Him with a magician who muttered incantations.

"Lazarus, come forth" — Jesus specifically called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb or all of the dead would have responded.

E. Lazarus' Appearance — 11:44

Lazarus appeared at the entrance of the tomb, bound in his grave clothes with a napkin around his face. Jesus commanded the people to loosen him and set him free.

III. The Reaction of the People — 11:45-53**A. Some Believed — 11:45**

11:45 — Some of the Jewish leaders believed, who had come to comfort Mary and had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.

B. Some Denied — 11:46

11:46 — Some of the Jewish leaders reported to the Pharisees what Jesus had done. They feared that this miracle would give Jesus a tremendous advantage with the people.

C. Some Plotted — 11:47-53

11:47 — The chief priests and Pharisees saw the situation was so grave that they called for a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling body of the Jews.

11:48 — They were afraid the people would follow Jesus and He would establish a new government of the Jews which Rome would not accept. Of course, if they had believed Jesus was God, they would have rejoiced; but they did not believe this for one moment.

11:49-53 — Caiaphas thought it would be best for Jesus to die so that the whole nation not be lost to the Romans. He did not realize his prophecy was in the plan of God. The Sanhedrin listened to him and it became the official plan of the nation to put Jesus to death and thus put down any plan by the people to establish a new government under His leadership.

IV. The Retreat of Jesus — 11:54-57

11:54 — Jesus went to Ephraim with His disciples. To the best of our knowledge, this city is about 14 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

11:55-57 — People were arriving in Jerusalem for the Passover feast that every male was to attend, if at all possible. They looked for Jesus, because the Jewish leaders had issued a warrant for His arrest, and discussed among themselves whether or not He would come to this important feast.