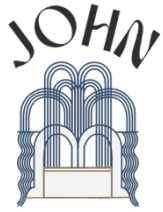


An Exposition of the
GOSPEL OF JOHN



“Victory Over Death”

Part 3

John 11:28-44

Theme: Jesus confronts death with compassion and divine authority so that people might believe in Him.

Introduction: One of the most comforting truths in Scripture is that God is never just reacting to circumstances. What seems to us to be chaos, tragedy, or an irreversible loss is often the very stage where He intends to reveal His glory most clearly. That truth is especially hard to remember when we are suffering. When God’s purposes are hidden from us, we tend to judge His goodness based on what we can see and understand in the moment. We wonder why He delays. We question why He allows pain to continue. We struggle to understand why He permits circumstances that seem to move further away from the outcome we hoped for.

Mary and Martha found themselves in just that situation. They had sent word to Jesus about the illness of their beloved brother Lazarus. They knew Christ loved their family. They believed He had the power to heal. Yet Lazarus died anyway. By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, four days had passed, the tomb was sealed, and all hope of earthly rescue had vanished. **[READ TEXT]**

What Mary and Martha had not yet realized was that Jesus had come not just to comfort a grieving family or even to restore a beloved friend. He came to reveal something far greater about Himself. He was about to demonstrate that He has authority not only over sickness but also over death itself. He would show that the darkest moments of human helplessness can become opportunities for God's glory to shine most brightly.

As Jesus approaches Lazarus's tomb, we see something extraordinary. He is not distant from human suffering. He is not indifferent to the tears of those He loves. He enters their grief, feels the weight of their sorrow, and weeps with them. At the same time, He stands before death not as a helpless bystander but as its victorious ruler. He has the authority to do what no one else can—bring life where death rules.

John records this event not just to help us admire a miracle, but to strengthen our faith in the One who performed it. In these verses, we see a Savior whose heart is full of compassion and whose words carry divine authority. We see the Son of God confronting mankind's greatest enemy and showing that even death must bow before Him.

As we walk through this passage, we will observe

1. **The Conflict within the Son of God** – vv. 28-37 as He enters the grief and devastation caused by sin,
2. **The Concern of the Son of God** – vv. 38-42 as He seeks to reveal the glory of God and provoke faith, and finally,
3. **The Command by the Son of God** – vv. 43-44 as He speaks life into a tomb and demonstrates His absolute authority over death.

The message of Bethany is clear: **Jesus confronts death with compassion and divine authority so that people might believe in Him.** And because He is the Lord of life, all who trust in Him can face even death itself with confidence and hope.

I. The Conflict within the Son of God – 11:28-37

A. The Devotion to Those Suffering – vv. 28-32

1. Jesus brought Martha to a place of renewed confidence and hope in the previous section.
2. He now clearly compels Martha to go back to her sister, whose suffering we have already seen was quite severe—Mary probably had hidden herself away in her pain.
3. Martha goes to her: *“And when she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you’.”*
4. This is how we know that Jesus told Martha to “fetch” Mary, to which she immediately and loudly responds, *“And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.”*
5. We are told that Jesus was outside the village, possibly near the cemetery, waiting for the chance to comfort Mary as soon as she approached Him—*“Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.”*
6. Mary had been struggling so much that even those coming to Bethany from Jerusalem couldn't ease her suffering.
7. The Jews believed she needed to return to the tomb. *“Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.”*
8. Mary melted in emotional exhaustion when she saw Christ, releasing her deepest feelings: *“Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died’.”*
 - a) *The two sisters approached the Lord with exactly the same words, just in a different order.*
 - b) *Mary shows more emotional turmoil by suggesting that part of her died with her brother, moving the pronoun “my” (κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὤδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός) before the verb, while Martha left it at the end of the sentence (κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὤδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός μου).*
 - c) *Martha's word order shows more objectivity, giving Jesus the chance to talk with her and strengthen her faith while she processes things theologically.*
 - d) *Mary's word order shows a grief that overwhelmed her and made*

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teaching pointless—only offering sympathy and action.¹

9. Notice the difference in Jesus' response—how Mary's grief touches His own heart—*“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.”*—deliberately and intentionally entering their grief.
10. Jesus' love for Martha and Mary caused His own heart to tear as He saw their suffering and pain – a beautiful display of what true love produces among believers when we *“weep with those who weep”* and *“mourn with those who mourn”* – ***Romans 12:15***.

B. The Distress because of Sin – vv. 32-37

1. The term used in v. 33, *“deeply moved,” [ἐμβριμάομαι]*, carries some interesting and very powerful nuances.
2. It means *“to be moved with anger; to admonish sternly,”* thereby showing that Jesus' emotions were not just empathetic toward Mary; they were angered by the destruction caused by sin and its consequences of death.
3. John goes on to describe Jesus as *“troubled”* – [ταράσσω], (Aor. Act. Ind. showing the degree reached by Him), a term that means *“to stir up”* or *“to cause movement by shaking or stirring”* – thus He was grieving *inside* because of the cause behind the sorrow, filled with an overwhelming understanding of the impact of sin.
4. In the combination of the two terms, we see that Jesus was angry at what death had done and deeply distressed by the sorrow it caused.
5. His immediate response to this is to take action – *“... and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’*
6. As they proceeded to the place, we are told that *“Jesus wept”* – a wonderful demonstration of the depth of Jesus' emotions.
7. Jesus' tears demonstrate that divine sovereignty does not eliminate divine compassion.
8. It is heartwarming to see the intensity of Jesus' emotions—impressing the crowd, who viewed it as a sign of His deep love for Lazarus—*“So the Jews were saying, ‘See how He loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?’”*.
9. Although the Scriptures do not specify the reason for these tears, some

¹ Frederic Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (GR: Kregel, 1978), pp. 742-743.

conclusions are probably:

- a) *They were tears of empathy for those He loved – v.36;*
- b) *They were tears of sorrow over the cause of death—sin with its curse, death, decay, and suffering, which matches the anger implied by his being “deeply moved.”*
- c) *They were tears of disappointment over their failure to fully believe in Him and His power, especially given the grief expressed that He is “too late.” – cp. v. 37.*
- d) *They were tears born from anticipation of His own suffering and death, knowing that what He was about to do—raising Lazarus from the dead—would set in motion the gears of His own murder.*

II. The Concern of the Son of God – 11:38-42

A. The Presentation of the Glory of God – vv. 38-40

1. Jesus's tremendous burden over sin and His indignation at its impact on people's lives caused Him great emotion – *“So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.”*
2. The repetition of Jesus *“being deeply moved”* shows that the burst of sorrow mentioned in v. 33 continues as a circumstantial, adverbial modifier describing how Jesus *“came to the tomb.”*
3. The only One capable of addressing sin and its consequence of death was prepared and willing to act – *“Jesus said, ‘Remove the stone.’”*
4. We are now approaching the main point of this account: the ability that this death gave the Son of God to be glorified, as the glory of God is revealed in Him – cp. v. 4.
5. In response to Jesus’ command, Martha indicates that her focus was not yet on the Lord of Life and protested – *“Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days’.”*
6. Jesus' response to her indicates that the message given in Perea (v. 4) was still the main point: that the Son of God was going to reveal the glory of God’s grace — *“Did not I say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”*
7. He would remove the wages of sin and undo the work that death had done by conquering him who had the power of death, swallowing death up in victory – He would raise Lazarus from the dead.
8. The glory of God shines brightest where human helplessness is greatest. When death appeared irreversible, and all human hope had faded, the

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Son of God stood ready to display divine life and power.

B. The Provocation of Faith – vv. 41-42

1. The reason He did this was to bring glory to the Father, reveal Himself as the true Messiah, and inspire those present to genuine saving faith.
2. We are told that because of Jesus' command, *“they removed the stone.”*
3. *“Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.’* – that is, in the moments of great agony of heart over the consequences of sin.
4. There had already been communion between God the Son and God the Father, and the purpose both were now committed to was to instigate saving faith in the hearts of those present: *“I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around, I said it so that they may believe that You sent Me.”*
5. He speaks as if what He is about to do has already happened, even thanking God because it clarified the purpose of Christ's coming to earth.
6. *“... that they may believe”* is an “ingressive aorist” meaning: *“...that they may come to believe.”*
7. Jesus was about to fulfill the Father's will and reveal God's glory by raising Lazarus from the dead, thereby calling people to faith in Him.

III. The Command by the Son of God – 11:43-44

A. The Authority of the Savior – v. 43

1. Jesus displays His authority over death by commanding life – *“When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’”*
2. To *“cry out with a loud voice”* is not necessary to *“wake the dead,”* but Jesus shouted forcefully so everyone in the crowd would be aware that even death's enemy could not ignore.
3. It displays the command and authority that belongs solely to God – cp. [Deuteronomy 32:39](#).
4. Here is a miniature of what will happen on resurrection day – that all graves would have opened had not Jesus specifically focused on *“Lazarus.”* - cp. [John 5:28-29](#).



5. One day, possibly soon, the Lord Jesus will again shout to the result that the dead in Christ will rise – cp. [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#).

B. The Advantage to the Sinner – v. 44

1. We are told that immediately, *“He who had died came forth ...”*
2. Lazarus was brought back to life at the command of God – quickened as it were from a dead condition by the marvelous grace of a loving Lord
3. The voice that called outside Lazarus’ tomb is the same voice that one day will summon every believer from the grave. Death may silence human voices, but it cannot silence the voice of the Son of God. When Christ commands life, even the grave must obey.
4. Christ’s authority over death and the grave provides us with the awareness that it cannot control us – He controls it – cp. [Romans 6:23](#).
5. Those who are in Christ by faith are children of resurrection.
 - a) *In one sense, we have already been quickened from the deadness of our spiritual state and made alive together with Christ – [Ephesians 2:5-6](#).*
 - b) *In another sense, we will be guaranteed future resurrection, in which we will receive the full inheritance of eternal life.*
6. An apt analogy can be drawn here using the story of Lazarus – he came out *“bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth.”*
7. This can be compared to how, when people are born again, they often wear the attire of worldliness and death – dressed in the world’s garments.
8. Even as believers are told to make disciples by, in part, “... teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you,” these people were told to *“Unbind him, and let him go.”*
9. There is a beautiful parallel between being raised from the spiritual deadness of our depravity and being enabled to find freedom from sin, and Lazarus’s resurrection and his release from the grip of death.
10. The question has been asked, “Where was Lazarus during the four days?”
 - a) *It seems that He would have been in Paradise, or Abraham’s bosom.*
 - b) *Much beyond this seems to be speculation.*
 - c) *It also seems that his mind would be cleared of recollections of what he had experienced there so that it seemed only a moment of time between his death and resurrection.*
11. At Bethany, Jesus demonstrated that death is not the ultimate authority. The grave is not sovereign. Corruption is not final.
12. The Son of God possesses absolute authority over life and death, and His

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word is powerful enough to summon the dead into life.

So What?

1. How does Jesus' compassion toward Mary and Martha encourage you to trust Him with your deepest griefs and disappointments?
2. Jesus said, "If you believe, you will see the glory of God." How have trials become opportunities for you to witness God's glory and power?
3. Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave with authority. Have you personally responded to Christ's call to spiritual life through repentance and faith?

Theme: Jesus confronts death with compassion and divine authority so that people might believe in Him.

VICTORY OVER DEATH

THEME: *Jesus confronts death with compassion and divine authority so that people might believe in Him.*

PART 3 • JOHN 11:28–44

1 THE CONFLICT WITHIN THE SON OF GOD 11:28–37

A. THE DEVOTION TO THOSE SUFFERING vv. 28–32

- Jesus shows deep love for Martha and Mary.
- He sends Martha to bring Mary, who comes in deep grief.
- Mary falls at Jesus' feet: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
- Jesus is deeply moved and troubled. He enters their grief.
- His love causes His own heart to rend. He weeps with those who weep (Rom. 10:15).

B. THE DISTRESS BECAUSE OF SIN vv. 32–37

- Jesus is "deeply moved" with anger at sin's devastation and "troubled" by its impact.
- He asks, "Where have you laid him?" and goes to the tomb.
- Jesus wept. His tears show compassion, sorrow over sin and death, disappointment in unbelief, and anticipation of His own suffering.
- The crowd is impressed: "See how He loved him!" Some question why He did not prevent death.

2 THE CONCERN OF THE SON OF GOD 11:38–42

A. THE PRESENTATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD vv. 38–40

- Jesus, still deeply moved, comes to the tomb and commands, "Remove the stone."
- Martha objects about the stench. Jesus replies, "Did not I say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"
- The glory of God shines brightest where human helplessness is greatest. The Son of God came to undo the work of death and conquer him who had the power of death.

B. THE PROVOCATION OF FAITH vv. 41–42

- They remove the stone because of Jesus' command.
- Jesus raises His eyes and prays: "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I said it so that they may believe that You sent Me."
- Jesus acts to bring glory to the Father and provoke people to come to saving faith.

3 THE COMMAND OF THE SON OF GOD 11:43–44

A. THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAVIOR v. 43

- Jesus cries out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth."
- He displays His authority over death. This command belongs to God alone.
- A preview of the resurrection day when He will call all the dead (John 5:28–29; 1 Thess. 4:16).

B. THE ADVANTAGE TO THE SINNER v. 44

- Lazarus comes forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.
- Christ's authority over death guarantees our victory (Rom. 6:23). The same voice will raise every believer.
- "Unbind him, and let him go." In Christ, we are raised from spiritual death and set free from sin—destined for eternal life.

THE BIG PICTURE: FROM GRIEF TO GLORY

HUMAN GRIEF
Deep pain and death surround us.

JESUS CARES
He enters our sorrow with love.

SIN'S DEVASTATION
Sin brings death and separation.

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED
Jesus comes to undo death and show God's grace and power.

FAITH PROVOKED
Jesus acts so people may come to believe in Him.

LIFE COMMANDED
His word is powerful—even death must obey.

VICTORY SECURED
Death is not the final word—Christ is Lord of life and death!

KEY TRUTH

At Bethany, Jesus demonstrated that death is not the ultimate authority. The grave is not sovereign. The Son of God possesses absolute authority over life and death, and His word is powerful enough to summon the dead into life.