

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 11:17-44 (July 5, 2026)
The Seventh Sign: The Raising of Lazarus

Central Truth: Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Through the raising of Lazarus, Jesus reveals His power over death, His compassion for those who suffer, and His invitation for all people to place their faith in Him.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Key Verse (verse 25) : "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.'"

Opening Question: Have you ever had to wait for God to answer a prayer?
How did the waiting affect your faith?

Lesson Objective: to understand that Jesus has authority over death, deeply cares about our sorrow, and calls us to trust Him as the source of eternal life.

Background: From His location near where John had been baptizing, Jesus hears that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, has become seriously ill, yet delays His departure for two days, finally explaining to His disciples that Lazarus has died and making His way to Bethany, located about two miles from Jerusalem.

I. Martha's Faith Encounters the Resurrection and the Life (verses 17-27)

- A. She believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus.
- B. She believed in a future resurrection.
- C. Jesus redirected her attention from a future event to His present power.

D. Jesus' fifth "I Am" statement: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Key Truth: Our hope is not merely in a future resurrection but in a living Savior.

Reflection Questions

What is the difference between believing in the resurrection and trusting the Author of the resurrection?

Why was Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life," so important? Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" Knowing how John intends for the word "believe" to be understood, how would you answer that question today?

II. Jesus Shares Our Sorrow (verses 28-37)

- A. Mary now comes to Jesus in deep grief and worship.
- B. Jesus saw and understood the pain of Mary and the mourners.
- C. Jesus was deeply moved and troubled.
- D. The shortest verse in Scripture reveals a profound truth: "Jesus wept."

Application: Jesus is not distant from our pain. He enters into our suffering with His deep and intimate compassion.

Reflection Questions

1. What does "Jesus wept" tell us about God's heart?
2. Why is it essential to know that Jesus understands our grief?

III. Jesus Demonstrates His Power Over Death (verses 38-44)

- A. Jesus commanded the stone to be removed.
- B. Martha struggled with doubt despite her earlier confession of faith.
- C. Jesus reminded her to believe and see God's glory.

- D. Jesus prayed publicly so the crowd would know He was sent by the Father.
- E. With a simple command, Jesus called Lazarus from the grave.

Application: Death is no match for the authority of Jesus Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. Why did Jesus have the stone removed before performing the miracle?
2. What does Lazarus' resurrection reveal about Jesus, both in terms of His power and His plan?
3. Where do you need to trust God's power instead of leaning on your own understanding?

IV. The Miracle Demands a Response (John 11:45)

- A. Many who witnessed the miracle believed in Jesus.
- B. Others rejected Him and reported Him to the Pharisees.
- C. This miracle accelerated the events that would lead to the cross.

Reflection Questions

1. Why did some people believe while others refused?
2. What keeps people from trusting Jesus today?
3. What evidence has God given you that encourages your faith?

Lessons for Life:

- Trust God's timing even when you don't understand it.
- Bring your grief and your disappointments to Jesus.
- Remember that Jesus has power over death and every circumstance of your life.
- Place your confidence in who Jesus is, not merely in what He can do for you.
- Live with hope because eternal life is found in Christ.

Closing challenge: Jesus asked Martha a question that echoes through the ages: “Do you believe this?” This week, ask God to show you where your faith is anchored. Is your confidence in circumstances, solutions, and outcomes that you create, or is your confidence in Jesus Himself? Identify one area where you need to trust Christ more fully and surrender it to Him, remembering that the One who called Lazarus from the tomb is still the Resurrection and the Life today.

Sunday School Lesson for July 5, 2026
John 11:17-44

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this first Sunday in July, we're well into our study of the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

After Jesus delivered His message in chapter ten about being the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep followed by yet another confrontation with the Pharisees and ending with them picking up stones to stone Him and trying to arrest Him, John says, "He escaped from their hands," John tells us in verse forty, "He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to him. And they said, 'John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.' And many believed in him there." In the first chapter of this gospel, John told us that the place where John had been baptizing was called "Bethany across the Jordan"--not to be confused with the Bethany of our story in chapter eleven.

In chapter eleven we find the wondrous story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead--the seventh sign that John gives us that points to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. John is the only gospel writer who records this story for us, and some scholars speculate that it's because Lazarus was still alive when Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their stories of the life of Jesus, and, in order to protect him from persecution, they didn't include this miracle account. John's gospel, you may recall, was the last to be written--around the year 95.

While Jesus was there in the wilderness north and east of Jerusalem, He received word that His dear friend, Lazarus, was sick. Lazarus was from

Bethany--about two miles away and just over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem and the place where Mary and Martha lived. Mary was the one, John will later tell us, “who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.” Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus telling Him that their brother was sick. In spite of the message, He stayed there two more days.

Finally, He told His disciples it was time to go back to Judea--the region around Jerusalem. His disciples warned Him that that’s where they were trying to kill Him, but He reminded them of the timing and the urgency of His mission, explaining in verse eleven, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” His disciples thought if he got some rest / he would get better, but Jesus finally told them, “Lazarus is dead.”

Bethany across the Jordan was about thirty miles from Bethany in Judea, so, with time for the message to arrive, Jesus’ delay, and the travel to Bethany, it could have been six days from the time the message was sent until He arrived. When Jesus got there, He was told that “Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days,” and, in verse nineteen, John tells us that “many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother,” as was the custom in those days.

Verse twenty: “So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.” Martha--the woman of impulse, energy, and practical duty; the older sister and the one who made sure / things around the house were as they should be--as we learn from the story in Luke, chapter eleven--Martha went out to meet Jesus and told Him--verse 21: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”

This wasn’t a rebuke or a criticism, but simply an expression of deep, wistful regret. The thought had naturally been on the sisters’ minds, and they had probably said that to each other many times over the last four days. They believed that Jesus could and would have healed Lazarus--if only He had been

there. Their faith and hope have not yet matured to the point that they could imagine Him raising their brother from the dead. The gradual progress of Martha's faith is very true to life, and reminds us of the similar development of the faith of the woman at the well of chapter four and the man born blind, although, when we meet Martha, we find that her faith is much more advanced when compared with theirs.

So, Jesus said to her--verse 23--, "'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'" In the first century, belief in the resurrection was accepted as true for just about everyone except the Sadducees. She believes in the resurrection, but she doesn't seem to find much consolation in it. The Last Day seems very far off. Meanwhile, where is her brother? If Jesus' words were intended to assure her of the general truth of the resurrection in the last day and that physical death is not the final state of the believer, Martha seems to have been convinced of this fact, but that wasn't what she was hoping for. What she really wanted was her brother back right then.

Jesus understood her unspoken request, and explained to her that He was the resurrection--verse 25: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.'" With yet another "I am" statement, Jesus explained that He is the author, the architect, and the originator of the resurrection. So completely does the resurrection depend on His power and will, that He said He Himself is the resurrection.

There's no need for her to look forward to the last day and the end of the world, the Lord Jesus is, right then and right now the resurrection--and the life. As the Resurrection, "he who believes in Me will live [eternally] even if he dies [physically]." As the life, "everyone who lives [physically] and believes in Me will never die [eternally]." He wanted her to know that her brother was alive at that very moment--he had already risen before his body began to decay. Jesus invites her to trust--not in a vague event far in the future--but in His living

person whom she knew, loved, and trusted. Apart from Him there was neither resurrection nor life. Belief in Him as the source of true spiritual life brings us into a vital union with Him so closely that we live bound up with the life of Christ and possess a life over which death has no power.

And then He asked, “‘Do you believe this?’ She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.’” Here’s the most important word in John’s gospel again--believe. Jesus was asking if she rested her eternal hope and confidence in Him--not in anything she could do to earn His favor--but simply and totally anchoring her destiny to the fact that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

And she doesn’t say she believes in what He can do--she believes in Who He is. Because He’s the Messiah it follows that He’s fully capable of carrying out everything He’s just told her. All too often, we look for what Jesus can do for us instead of just seeking Him for Who He is. How those powers and ability will affect her own longing for her brother to be restored to life, she probably didn’t know, but her faith is such that she goes to the house to let her sister know the Lord has come. John doesn’t provide us with any more details of this conversation other than to tell us that--verse 28--, “When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.”

In verse thirty, John tells us that Jesus had not yet arrived at Bethany, and it’s likely that Martha told her in private that Jesus had come in order to avoid attracting too much attention to Him. When Mary left, those who were mourning with her thought she was going to weep at the tomb, so they followed her. When she met Jesus, she repeats the same words Martha had used when **they** met--verse 32: “Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

When Mary found Jesus, she fell at His feet. From what we learn from the story of Jesus eating dinner at the home of Martha and Mary, we know that Mary was the one with the greater faith and the greater desire to engage with Him and allow His word to fill her heart and mind, so it's not unusual that Mary would have knelt at the feet of Jesus in this profound moment of grief.

Although she made the very same observation that Martha had made--that if He had been there / their brother would not have died--, Mary burst into tears. Perhaps she recalled how, in the days before their brother's death, they had knelt by his bed, hoping against hope that Jesus would come, knowing that, if He were to come, Lazarus would not die. But now, he's dead, and, as far as she knows, it's too late.

John tells us in verse 33 that "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled." "Jesus saw her weeping." The word we have translated "saw" means much more than "taking a glance at." It means "to perceive," "to attend to," and often, "to see with the mind." He saw clearly the depth of their grief, their sense of loss, their brokenness.

His seeing her and those mourning with her caused him to "be deeply moved in spirit and troubled." So great a wave of emotion swept across the usually calm soul of the Lord, that John invites us to discover its cause with the word, "therefore." The sight of Mary's unrestrained tears as she fell at His feet and doleful sound of the mourners who accompanied her / deeply moved His spirit, and He was troubled. The word that's translated "deeply moved" or "groaned" usually means to be angry or offended with great mental distress, but here it describes a violent agitation within the very core of His Being. He saw--He felt, deeply--the sorrow of those who grieved, and He was visibly moved with sympathy and love.

To see a woman like Mary casting herself at His feet, breaking into a flood of tears, and crying with intense regret, "Lord, if You had been here, my

brother would not have died,” was enough to bring tears even to the hardest heart. But the care John uses to describe the disturbance of Jesus’ spirit, the emphasis he lays upon His groaning, the notice he takes of the account the Jews give of His tears,--all seem to indicate that something more than ordinary grief or sympathy was the source of those tears, the cause of the distress that could only be expressed in audible groans.

But what caused Him to show such emotion? Some scholars say it was anger, others say it was grief, while still others offer a combination of factors. The Jews who saw Him weep supposed that His tears were prompted by sorrow for their loss and sympathy with the sisters.

Some scholars say that Jesus was angered by the deep anguish of the mourners who saw death as the end of existence--those who thought that death separates the dead from God and from life, instead of allowing a closer access to God and an even more abundant life. As one commentator writes, “He could not bear this evidence that even the best of God’s children do not believe in God as greater than death, and in death as ruled by God.”

Some suggest that He was angered by the professional mourners who customarily showed up at gravesites with their make-believe compassion at the expense of those whose hearts truly broke at the loss of a loved one.

Others suggest that the cause of Lazarus’ death brought out this emotion--not the physical cause of his death, but the sin that produced death--that physical and spiritual reality that never was intended to be part and parcel of our human existence were it not for the sin of our first parents in disobeying God and eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

One commentator writes, “In this heart-rending scene of mourning: the grave of the departed friend, the broken hearts of the beloved sisters, and the tears of their sympathizers, Jesus saw a miniature photograph of the world of human suffering caused by the terrible curse of sin.” Another adds, “He entered with vivid and intense human sympathy into all the primary and

secondary sorrows of death. He saw the long procession of mourners from the first to the last, all the reckless agony, all the hopelessness of it, in thousands of millions of instances. There flashed upon his spirit all the terrible moral consequences of which death was the ghastly symbol.”

Still others say He was troubled because He knew what lay ahead. He would raise Lazarus from the dead, but it would provoke the Jewish leaders to sign His death warrant, so to speak, and then He would face the agony of the cross as He bore the punishment for the sins of the world.

In the end, it could have been any one or some combination of these possibilities. One commentator answers the question by saying, “The only worthy explanation of that strange ingredient in Christ’s agitation is that it was directed against the source of death,—namely, sin. He saw the cause manifested in the effects. He wept for the one, He was [enraged by] the other. The tears witnessed to the perfect love of the man, and of the God revealed in the man; the indignation witnessed to the recoil and aversion from sin of the perfectly righteous Man, and of the holy God manifested in Him.”

In the midst of the emotions that troubled His spirit, He asked, “Where have you laid him?” In asking this question, Jesus didn’t need to be told where the grave was; it was an invitation for them to lead the way. In being willing to go to the grave, Jesus accepted what lay before Him. He had told His disciples and all who would listen that He was the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. He knew full well that, if He were to raise Lazarus from the dead, it would cause the Jewish leaders to come to the point of agreement that Jesus had to be put to death. Later in this chapter—in verse 48—we hear the Pharisees complain, “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation,” prompting John to write in verse 53: “From that day on they plotted to take his life.” In asking where Lazarus lay, He was taking yet one more, decisive step towards the cross.

“Jesus wept.” The shortest verse in the Bible, but so filled with insight into the heart of God. It’s truly a profound announcement from John’s journal--the Son of God allowing the grief that gripped His heart in that tragic moment to bring forth tears.

As only he can, Max Lucado describes the scene as he understands it: “And Jesus wept--not for the dead but for the living. He wept not for the one in the cave of death but for those in the cave of fear. He wept for those who, though alive, were dead. He wept for those who, though free, were prisoners, held captive by their fear of death.”

Nowhere in scripture do we read that Jesus laughed, but we know so well by these two words that He cried. I’m quite sure He laughed--as He told stories about His childhood or thought about some of the curious ways His own disciples responded to the things He said, or as He listened to them tell their own, familiar and amusing stories of life as they reclined at dinner or walked along the road. Since He was the One Who came that we might have life to the full, laughter is surely a vital part of that abundant life, but here He bares His heart before His friends and the world, and the tears flow freely as God cries.

One important thing this verse tells us is that sorrow at the death of a friend or loved one is not inappropriate. It’s okay to cry at the sense of loss. In faith--trusting God in all things--we can mourn with a heart of trust and confidence in God. We can weep without complaining and learn to adjust to a new reality--not by steeling yourself or keeping a stiff upper lip or forgetting the friend, but by allowing your soul to embrace the certainty, the comfort, and the peace that only God can give, and--in time--allow “the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” to use your grief to comfort others, just as Paul explains in the first chapter of Second Corinthians, verses three and four.

So moved was Jesus at the scene before Him and all that it entailed--past, present, and future--that John writes in verse 36, “So the Jews were saying,

‘See how He loved him!’” Even in this mournful moment, the Jews couldn’t recognize the burden Jesus bore, for His grief was not only for His friend, Lazarus, as deep as that friendship may have been, especially since He knew He was about to call Him back from the dead--His grief was for all the death, all the pain, all the grief that He had seen and would yet see, surely including the pain He Himself would experience all too soon.

Some of the Jews took a compassionate notice of Jesus’ tears and the anguish of His countenance, but there were others who had less honorable thoughts--verse 37: “Some of them said, ‘Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?’” They were thinking, “Keeping someone from dying is beyond His power. He’s limited in what He can do. He can open the eyes of one born blind, heal a man who had been sick for 38 years, but it looks like death is just too powerful for Him.” Some may have even thought that His previous miracles were faked, and his inability to do anything about Lazarus to this point only fueled that speculation.

You would have thought that, by now, they would have heard about the healing of Jairus’ daughter and the son of the widow of Nain, and knew that He could bring the dead back to life, and, if He can do that, He’s surely able to keep someone from dying in the first place. It’s possible, though, that because those miracles happened in Galilee, the people of Bethany and nearby Jerusalem may not have heard about them, while the healing of the man born blind happened right where they lived.

The procession moved to the tomb where Lazarus’ body had been placed--verse 38: “So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.” Having dealt with the distraction of the skeptics and critics, John turns back to focus attention on Jesus as He makes His way to the tomb, repeating His observation that Jesus was deeply moved by His private thoughts.

The tombs that were common in that day were usually caves or excavations made in the sides of hills or sometimes dug out of solid rock. These excavations could sometimes be quite large, extending deep into the ground. As John notes, the entrance to the tomb was sealed by a stone that kept marauding animals from desecrating the bodies that lay inside. In this case, it appears that the tomb was a family vault. If you visit Jerusalem and are able to make the short trip to Bethany--modern-day al-Eizariya, on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives, you can tour the place that you see in this picture where many believe Lazarus' first tomb was located.

It was a remarkable moment--Jesus, tear-stained face, standing before the stone that marked the death of His friend, a friend to others, a brother and more--standing before that symbol of what was never, ever intended to be part of the human experience were it not for sin.

Jesus' command is simple: "Remove the stone." His instructions are consistent with His practice of keeping the miracle in focus, and He won't do anything by a miracle that can be done without it. Lazarus could have heard the Lord's call and come out of the cave without the stone being moved, but that would have detracted from what would happen next.

Before anyone can move, though, the ever-practical Martha steps in, perhaps intending to give Jesus some helpful advice before they move the stone: "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." When we last heard of Martha, she had gone back to the house, but now she's at the tomb, warning Him of the likely smell of the decomposing body, suggesting that maybe He really doesn't want to do this, perhaps because of the impression it would make on the mourners or the indignity it would bring to her brother.

But wasn't this the same Martha who told the Lord in verse 21, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." To which Jesus had

responded, “Your brother will rise again,” and then told her that He is “the resurrection and the life;” and that “he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” When He asked, “‘Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.’” But now she seems to have forgotten her earlier hope. So, in order to reassure her and strengthen her wavering faith, He says in verse forty, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

John’s recollection of Martha’s words that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days is proof that the raising of Lazarus wasn’t a deception. Rabbi Ben Kaphra, a renown Jewish teacher who lived during the second and third centuries after Christ, is said to have written, “For three days (after death) the spirit wanders about the sepulchre, expecting / if it may / [to] return into the body. But when it sees that the form or aspect of the face is changed, then it hovers no more, but leaves the body to itself.” At the end of the third day, according to this tradition, there was nothing but decomposing flesh and no possibility of resuscitation.

Jesus’ rebuke of Martha’s words was loving and gracious--verse forty: “Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’” One commentator writes, “There was her brother lying in the tomb / dead, and there he would lie for ages dead; What comfort did the vague and remote hope of reunion after long ages of untold change bring? What comfort is to sustain her through the interval? ... He comforts her, not by pointing her to a far-off event which was vague and remote [as she may have understood the resurrection of the dead], but to His own living person, whom she knew, saw, and trusted. And He assured her that [He held the keys to] resurrection and life; that all, therefore, who belonged to Him were uninjured by death, and had in Him a present and continuous life.”

“So they removed the stone.” Verse 41. “Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 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.” When He had been asked to explain Who He was and where He had come from, Jesus had told them so many times, “The Father has sent Me.” Now, He lifts His eyes to heaven--that stirring symbol of the infinite activity and oversight of God that surrounds us, day and night--and He speaks to His heavenly Father, thanking Him for hearing Him and glorifying Himself in what’s about to happen. He thanks the Father as a public acknowledgment that the Son can do “nothing of Himself,” but that the power which He is about to exhibit is from the Father Who had sent Him.

There was no mystical incantation, no repeating of some spell or chant, no wrestling with God in prayer--only a simple word of thanks, as if Lazarus had already been raised from the dead. He thanks the Father so that all would hear / because it was essential that the miracle be connected to its real source, and that everyone would recognize that it was the Father who had sent Jesus to demonstrate His power in this moment.

At this point in the story, Alexander MacLaren draws us into the moment: “What a scene! There is the open tomb, with its dead occupant; there are the eager, sceptical crowd, the sisters pausing in their weeping to gaze, with some strange hopes beginning to creep into their hearts, the silent disciples, and, in front of them all, Jesus, with the radiance of power in the eyes that had just been swimming in tears, and a new elevation in His tones. How all would be hushed in expectance of the next moment’s act!”

“When he had said these things,”--verse 43--“he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” He spoke with a clear, distinct, audible voice. Like the raising of Jairus’ daughter of Mark, chapter five and the son of the widow of Nain recorded in Luke, chapter seven, Lazarus was recalled to life by an authoritative command from the Lord Jesus Himself. It was His

voice that addressed Lazarus--personally commanding him to come out of the tomb.

And what did Lazarus do when he heard the authoritative command of the Son of God? “The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.” The man who had died”—not someone else, but the same man who had been pronounced dead, placed in a tomb, and mourned for four days.

And out he came, “bound hand and foot.” We don’t know whether the whole body and limbs were bound together or if each limb was wrapped separately. When a person was embalmed, the whole body and limbs were wrapped up by strips of linen in order to keep the spices in place, but this may not have happened in Lazarus’ case. It’s possible that the body was simply wrapped in a single sheet as the custom remains in some parts of Asia today where they don’t use coffins. The body is stretched out and the arms laid out straight by the sides, then the whole body, from head to foot, is wrapped tightly with linen or cotton cloth.

MacLaren writes, “Lazarus was far away from that rock cave. But, wherever he was, he could hear, and he must obey. So, with graveclothes entangling his feet, and a napkin about his livid face, he came stumbling out into the light that dazed his eyes, closed for four dark days, and stood silent and motionless in that awestruck crowd. One Person there was not awestruck. Christ’s calm voice, that had just reverberated through the regions of the dead, spoke the simple command, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’ To Him it was no wonder that He should give back a life. For the Christ who wept is the Christ whose voice / all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth.”

One scholar adds this observation: “The reserve of the Gospel narrative here is evidence of its truth, and is in marked contrast to the myths about others who are said to have returned from the grave. Lazarus makes no revelations as to the unseen world. The traditions about him have no historic

value: but one mentioned by [R.C. Trench in his book, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*] is worth remembering. It is said that the first question which he asked Christ after being restored to life was whether he must die again; and being told that he must, he was never more seen to smile.” Another tradition says that he lived another thirty years before he died--again, and we don’t have any record of what he saw or heard or experienced after he stepped through the gates of death into the presence of God, in spite of the many theories that have been suggested. One day, we’ll know.

So, Lazarus stepped out of the tomb, not without considerable difficulty since he was still wrapped in his graveclothes. “Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” Their active participation in releasing him would remove every doubt that Lazarus really was alive again.

Then, without a word of how Lazarus responded to having been brought back from the dead, any mention of the reunion of brother and sisters and loved ones, or any further comment about this greatest of signs that we’ve heard about / that pointed to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, John passes on to show the significance of this miracle in the Lord’s fixed progression to fulfill the purpose for which He had come--to be the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for His Sheep so that all who believe in Him would have life in all its fullness.

He tells us next that some of those present did place their trust in Him as the Messiah--the Savior of the world--verse 45: “Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.” But, there were others, John tells us / who “went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.” Their conclusion is recorded for us in verse 53. Because Jesus had become a perpetual threat to their privileges and entitlements, the chief priest insisted they put an end to their Messiah. “So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.”

So chapter eleven closes with the details of how it was decided that Jesus must die--all prompted by the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The ten chapters that led up to this point have shown how Jesus revealed Himself to the Jews in so many ways that were intended to lead them to place their trust in Him--to believe in Him--but how each new miracle and teaching and encounter served only to embitter them against Him and harden their unbelief into hopeless hostility.

In these few pages, John has given us a wonderfully compressed but vivid summary of the miracles and conversations of Jesus that have revealed His true character and work. Jesus has shown Himself to be the Light of the World, yet the darkness does not comprehend Him. He has made Himself known as the True Bread that gives Life, but they will not come to Him that they might have Life. He has presented Himself as the Truth that would make us free, but they chose to serve the father of lies and do his work.

We've come to see Him as the Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep so they might have life to the full, but they would not hear His voice and follow Him. And He has shown Himself to be God in human flesh, come to dwell among us, sharing our sorrows and our joys, even though He was hated more as He loved more. And now, when He reveals Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, the holder of the key to what would reverse the human condition and deliver us from sin and death, they resolve to kill Him.

But--verse 45, "Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him." Alexander MacLaren concludes his comments on this passage with these words: "The series of our Lord's miracles before the Passion, as recorded in this Gospel, is fitly closed with the raising of Lazarus. It crowns the whole, whether we regard the greatness of the fact, the manner of our Lord's working, the minuteness and richness of the accompanying details, the revelation of our Lord's heart, the consolations which it suggests to sorrowing spirits, or the immortal hopes which it kindles." "Christ is the Life, and, therefore, Christ is the Resurrection, and the thing that

we call death is but a film which spreads on the surface, but has no power to penetrate into the depths of the relationship between us and Him.”

Lazarus’ resurrection is a glorious illustration of the resurrection that awaits every believer in Christ. With the same power yet with a far greater permanence, Jesus will raise all the dead. This miracle shows that all He has to do is speak the word and the dead are raised. “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” “Oh, how important it is that we be prepared for that moment when His voice shall be heard in our silent tombs, and He shall call us forth again to life!”

Thank you for being a part of our brief overview of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him.

Next week, we come to chapter twelve, just six days before Passover where Jesus dines with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha--Trey will speak to that event--and we’ll also hear Jesus’ final message to the crowds who had come to hear Him in verses twenty through 36 as He explains to them that how time had come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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