

# The Gospel of John

## Chapter 11:1-44

*July 13, 1997*

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
- Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery; The Son makes you free; Abraham's true children
- Chapter 9 Jesus heals a man born blind.
- Chapter 10 Jesus is the Door and the True Shepherd
- Chapter 11 Our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life

- **Review and Introduction**

At the conclusion of His discourse with the Jews, Jesus moves northward again to the region of Aenon or perhaps northeastward to the region of Perea, which is where John had been preaching previously. Just in John's account, Jesus has traveled between the north and south many times. We can see that His visit was fruitful in that many believed in Him, but in this account we have no information about His activities in the northern region.

John includes this miracle because it, perhaps more than any other, manifests the deity of our Lord and demonstrates His dominion over all things, even death.

- **Exposition of John 11:1-44**

*Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.<sup>2</sup> It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."<sup>4</sup> When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*

- We can see that Lazarus was a dear friend of our Lord but we know very little of him. John makes a point of ensuring that we know which Mary is being spoken of so that we are not misled. This Mary who anoints Jesus' feet in the next chapter, is not the same woman mentioned by Luke in 7:37; this is a different household, in a different city. Jesus declares that this sickness will not ultimately result in the death of Lazarus but we know from the account that Lazarus was dead for four days.
- Jesus, as he has done before, declares that this infirmity has been brought for the express purpose of glorifying the Lord. Just as the man born blind, God will glorify Himself in all things even in our sicknesses or perils. This fact brings joy for those who rejoice in His sovereignty and brings confusion for those who would declare a "health and wealth" gospel.

*5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.<sup>6</sup> So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.<sup>7</sup> Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."<sup>8</sup> The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.<sup>10</sup> "But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

- Again, we see Jesus responding to the situations that confront Him in His own timing which came from His Father. It was probably curious to the disciples that Jesus did not depart immediately but He has reminded them frequently that He moves at His Father's command. Given that it was probably a two-day journey to Bethany and that we know Jesus waits two days to depart and that Lazarus was dead for four days when Jesus arrives, Lazarus must have died very shortly after Jesus was informed of the sickness.
- The disciples carefully question the wisdom of Jesus' decision to go back into Judea given the hostility when they recently left. In response, Jesus gives a picture which is somewhat hard to interpret. Jesus has previously told the disciples to walk in the light while He is still with them (9:4), and perhaps gives additional instruction on the same topic in 12:35. He encourages the disciples to walk in the light so that they do not stumble and John is very fond of using this illustration in his writings in 1 John 1. The disciples were not to fear going into Judea because while walking in the light, a man will not stumble.

*11 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."<sup>12</sup> Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."<sup>13</sup> However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."<sup>15</sup> "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

- Obviously, the disciples did not understand Jesus' remark about sleep and assumed He was speaking of sleep rather than death. Therefore, Jesus speaks plainly and declares that Lazarus is already dead. We see that Jesus waits for Lazarus to die and for the disciples to be prepared to see the miracle and believe. Thomas, although loyal, displays that he did not believe that Jesus would elude His enemies.

*17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.<sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.<sup>19</sup> And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.<sup>20</sup> Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.<sup>21</sup> Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."<sup>22</sup> "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."<sup>24</sup> Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.<sup>26</sup> "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"<sup>27</sup> She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

- Martha goes out to meet Him and demonstrates her faith in Him. Although she believes in His ability to heal, she does not fully understand the deity of her Lord. She believes in the general resurrection, but does not yet understand what His intentions are with Lazarus. Jesus declares that He is the source resurrection and the source of life. This has been declared previously in 1:4, 6:35, 10:28.

*28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you."<sup>29</sup> As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.<sup>31</sup> Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."<sup>32</sup> Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.<sup>34</sup> And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"<sup>37</sup> And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"*

- Now, Mary goes to meet Jesus and weeps at His feet. We can see the glorious humanity of our Lord as He grieves with Mary for the loss of His friend. Jesus may have been grieved by the effects of sin which generally brings death or He simply shared Mary's grief. There is also a possibility that Jesus is disappointed that His close friends did not understand that He was the source of life but this understanding is not probable even though He questions Martha later about her testimony, v. 40.

*38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"<sup>41</sup> Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me."<sup>42</sup> "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."<sup>43</sup> Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"<sup>44</sup> And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." NKJV*

- By simply commanding, Jesus grants life to Lazarus' lifeless body and he responds. There is no cooperation by Lazarus here; Jesus grants life unilaterally and Lazarus lives by the grace of God. This miracle not only gives us instruction about who Jesus is, but also displays that Jesus has the power to raise us up just as He did with Lazarus. However, our resurrection will not be like Lazarus'; the primary difference here is that Lazarus later dies again. When we have been resurrected from the grave at or Lord's return, death will be defeated at the end and we who are in Christ shall never taste death again but will live forever with Him.