

I AM...the Resurrection and the Life

Read John, chapter 11

NOTE: to you who have been following these lessons in sequence, I am keeping the lessons I taught our Sunday School class in numerical order. However, the lesson on chapter 10 is missing from this sequence since a Pastor from our church taught that lesson in my absence.

I / INTRODUCTION: SOME SIGNIFICANCES OF THIS CHAPTER & SIGN [MIRACLE]

1 / Chapter 11 brings us to a significant point in our survey/study of this Gospel. Some Bible teachers divide John into three distinct sections:

1. **ch 1.1-18** / PROLOGUE
2. **chs 1.19-11.57** / WITNESS [wherein John chronicles numerous eye-witnesses to Jesus' Deity and God-ness]
3. **chs 12.1-21.25** / PASSION

2 / This chapter also records the 7th sign-miracle that John highlights to demonstrate and proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God [see ch 20.30-31]

1. turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana / **ch 2.11**
2. healing the official's servant / **ch 4.54**
3. healing the man who had been lame for thirty-eight years / **ch 5.1-14**
4. feeding the 5000 / **ch 6.1-14**
5. walking on the water / **ch 6.16-21**
6. giving sight to the man born blind / **ch 9.1-7**
7. raising Lazarus from the dead / **ch 11.1-44**

3 / AND this chapter also records one of the seven "**I AM**" declarations that Jesus makes concerning Himself that He, Himself, is the God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush [**Exodus 3.14-15**]

1. I AM the Bread of Life / **ch 6.35, 41, 48, 51**
2. I AM the Light of the World / **ch 8.12**
3. I AM the Door of the Sheep / **ch 10.7, 9**
4. I AM the Good Shepherd / **ch 10.11, 14**
5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life / **ch 11.25**
6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life / **ch 14.6**
7. I AM the True Vine / **ch 15.1, 5**

4 / This sign-miracle that Jesus will work by raising Lazarus from the dead will demonstrate beyond all disproving and disbelieving that He is God. There will be many eye-witnesses, and many will believe in Him / **ch 11.45**. Though also, as we shall see, His miracle only further infuriated the Jewish religious leaders, inflamed their hatred toward Him, and stirred up their plots to immediately kill Him ... and not just Jesus, but they determined also they would kill Lazarus as well / **ch 12.9-11**.

II / vv 1-16 / 'LORD, HE WHOM YOU LOVE IS ILL...'

1 / Jesus was in a different region 'across the Jordan' several miles to the east from Bethany when He received this verbal message that '**He whom you love is ill.**' / see **ch 10.40**]. There had been a time interval of a few weeks between the events of **ch 10.22-42** and **ch 11**. In **ch 10.22**, '**It was winter.**' In **ch 11.55**, '**Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand...**' This would have been in our month of March-April.

2 / Mary is identified as the one '**who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.**' This event is described before it happened in **ch 12.1-8** so John could specify which Mary it was. This is the same Mary and Martha who hosted Jesus in **Lk 10.38-42**.

3 / Jesus gave His Divine perspective, not only on Lazarus's sickness and eventual physical death, but also on all of ours as well. *All of our sickness, suffering, sadness, pain, grief – and even death itself – are opportunities for God to display and demonstrate His greater Glory ... and for us to see and experience the Power of His eternal life / see v 40.*

“Let us remember that the final result of Lazarus's sickness is what we should desire as the result of any sickness that comes on us and our families: namely, that God and Christ may be glorified in us. We cannot say, ‘It shall not end in death,’ but we can say, ‘By God's help, it shall be for the glory of God.’” / Pastor J. C. Ryle.

4 / That's why Jesus remained where He was for two days longer before going to Bethany to raise Lazarus from death: so Mary and Martha, and all of their friends who were mourning with them could see a greater display of His Glory – that is, the Glory of God. Yes, it would have been a glorious miracle if He had immediately gone to heal Lazarus of this sudden sickness that had beset him ... or He could have even healed Lazarus from where He was with just a word, as He had done before. BUT He wanted to work a miracle that would demonstrate even a much-greater Glory by waiting until Lazarus had undoubtedly and undeniably died – by raising Him from the dead.

III / vv 17-27 / “I AM...THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE!”

1 / It is significant that by the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, **‘He found that Lazarus had already been the tomb four days.’** By this time, the decomposition of his corpse would have already set in. There was no doubt that Lazarus had really died. His physical life had departed from his body days ago.

2 / **‘Does Jesus care...’** This is an old song that some of us have heard over our lifetimes. we can almost imagine Martha and Mary leading their friends in several stanzas of this song. Not really...but we do know that they questioned in their own hearts why Jesus had delayed His coming. Both of them made the same heart-broken complaint to Jesus: **‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died’ / vv 21 & 32.** If it wasn't a complaint, it was at least an expression of their disappointment in Jesus. They couldn't understand His delay. *Though sometimes – maybe even often – we may question the wisdom and caring of God's timing in our circumstances, we know we can always trust Him to do what is wisest according to Him, loving, and for our greater good and His Glory.*

3 / I want to quote Pastor Ryle again: *“The servants of Christ are often placed in circumstances just as puzzling and perplexing as those of His disciples. They are led in ways of which they cannot see the purpose and object; they are called to fill positions from which they naturally shrink, and which they would never have chosen for themselves. Thousands in every age are continually learning this by their own experience. The path they are obliged to walk in is not the path of their own choice. At present they cannot see its usefulness or wisdom ... If Christians were allowed to choose their own course through life, they would never learn hundreds of lessons about Christ and His grace, which they are now taught in God's ways. Let us remember these things. The time may come when we shall be called to take some journey in life which we greatly dislike. When that time comes, let us set out cheerfully, and believe that all is right.”*

4 / Jesus makes one of His profound **“I AM”** statements here. When He assured Martha that her brother would rise again, she replied with her own confession of faith: **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”** Jesus affirms the truth of her faith in the resurrection to come, but He also declares that HE, HIMSELF, is the One who will effect THAT resurrection ... but that HE is also there with her, and that she must trust Him to give resurrection and life whenever, wherever, and to whomever He wills. **“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. Do you believe this?”** We need to believe, confess, and remember what Jesus promises:

1. He Himself is the promise, power, and assurance of our resurrection and life – both physical and spiritual
2. All who believe in Jesus, even though they die physically, yet we shall live eternally with Him

3. All believers, while they live until they die from here physically, will never really die [that is, cease to live] ... we just pass from living in and with Christ here to living in and with Christ there in Heaven and in His Presence. **Life with Christ here ... and life with Christ there ... is a seamless continuum – and physical death is only the momentary segue.**

IV / vv 28-37 / ‘JESUS WEPT’

1 / What we witness in this exchange between Jesus and these two mourning sisters is a demonstration of the perfect, full, and unified Deity and humanity of Jesus. Look and marvel at how He sympathized with their physical emotions, trauma, and grief. **“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled...Jesus wept” vv 33-35.** This same word for **‘deeply moved’** is found again in **verse 38**. The word actually means *‘to snort...express indignant displeasure.’* Also, the word for **‘greatly troubled’** means *‘to be shaken emotionally, to be deeply agitated in your innermost being.’*

2 / While Jesus’ being **deeply moved** could also have been at His indignation at the sin that has caused all of this human and physical trauma, we cannot overlook or deny that it was also an expression of His infinite sympathy for us and how closely and personally He identifies with all our grief and suffering / **see Hebrews 4.14-16.**

3 / When Jesus is said to **‘love’** Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, He really did! / **see vv 3, 5, 11 [‘friend’], 36.** And we can be sure that He has the same unconditional, sympathizing love for us also who love and believe in Him. And I do mean every one of us – regardless of our stages and degrees of maturity, our deficiencies of personality and temperaments, or our inconsistencies and even failures sometimes of faith and confidence in Him.

V / vv 38-44 / “LAZARUS, COME OUT!”

1 / Jesus had asked them where they had laid Lazarus ... and to take Him to the tomb where he had been buried for the past four days. He told them to roll away the circular stone that had been cut to cover the mouth of the sepulcher. Martha expressed her genuine concern about uncovering the mouth of the burial site. They all knew that by this time, Lazarus’s corpse would have begun to decompose: **‘Lord, by this time there will be an odor...’** Of course, there will be. Their custom was to slather burial oils and perfumes on the dead body before wrapping it in strips of cloth specifically for this purpose – to mitigate the offensive odors and stench that would emanate from the numerous burial sites around their communities. NOTE: the very stench of Lazarus’s corpse would be its own testimony to his actually being dead and beginning to decompose ... and also the Glory of God that would be visibly demonstrated in raising him back to life.

2 / **Pay close attention to v 40!** **“Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God.’”** Yes, they would have seen God’s Glory being worked out through Jesus if He had come immediately and healed Lazarus before he died. But Jesus had already told the disciples [v 4] and also Martha that ***if she would believe and trust Him, she would see for herself the Glory of God being manifest and demonstrated in what He would do.*** But raising him from the dead was a *much greater Glory* than merely healing him. We, too, must learn to trust His wisdom and Providence and patiently wait for Him to work His sovereign pleasure and will in the time and ways He knows is wisest, best for us, and most glorifying to His Grace / **see Romans 8.28.**

3 / **And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”** Do you hear what Jesus is praying? He knows that the Father hears and receives His perfect prayers and gives Him whatever He asks for. AND He wants us to hear this prayer as well – so that we, too, will be comforted when He prays for us! And He does! / **see Hebrews 7.25.**

4 / Jesus has promised us before that the Father has given Him all authority to judge, give life, and raise the dead / **see ch 5.19-29.**

5 / **When He had said these things, 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.”** And with that, the now-living Lazarus who had come hobbling out of the gravesite cave where he had been lovingly laid, mourned, and left dead four days ago was unwrapped, and walked back home with his sisters under his own power!

6 / All of us who are believers in Christ can look forward with great anticipation ... and be comforted and rejoice in the hope that ALL BELIEVERS will hear that same life-giving resurrection Voice when Jesus returns again accompanied by all those who have died before us.

1 Thessalonians 4.13-18: But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

VI / vv 45-57 / ‘THEY MADE PLANS TO PUT HIM TO DEATH’

1 / So, here’s the grand conclusion to this amazing display of the Glory of God...

2 / **Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what He did, believed in Him.** Remember, this is the purpose for which Jesus did all His sign-miracles ... and the reason John has written about them / see ch 20.30-31.

3 / **...but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.** We are left to wonder what their motivation was: was it report Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders who were publicly known to be looking for Him, hunting Him down to kill Him? Or could they have gone to report this miracle in the hopes that the Pharisees would see the error of their ways and reverse their murderous plots and maybe believe in Him themselves?

4 / vv 47-52 / This account of the internal deliberations among the chief priests and Pharisees only reveals that they were willing to use Jesus as a political pawn and ‘scapegoat’ to direct the suspicion and ire of the Roman government away from themselves to Jesus. What they did, however, was give voice to God’s Divine redemptive purpose for Jesus’ soon-coming death: **He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.** Jesus would indeed die at the hands of Romans and the Jews who would turn Him over to them ... but in so dying, He would become the ‘Savior of the world,’ that is, people of all ethnicities and nationalities.

5 / **So from that day on they made plans to put Him to death [v 53] ... Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest Him [v 57] ... When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus [ch 12.9-11].**

DO YOU BELIEVE?