

The event that takes place in this chapter is, to our knowledge, the last (and probably the greatest) miracle performed by Jesus during His public ministry. It happens in a little village called Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. This village of about 1000 people is still there, now called El-Azarieh, which means “the place of Lazareth.”

It takes place at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. What we see Jesus do here is the ultimate illustration of the writer’s purpose in writing his gospel, as he states in chapter 20: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (30-31).

At this point in His ministry, Jesus is no longer speaking to the “nation” of Israel. He has “retired” into private mentoring and ministry, as His time on earth grows short. The events in this chapter take place sometime between the Feast of Dedication (chapter 10) and Passover, His last on earth. This would be sometime between December and April in His last year.

As Jesus “walked among us in the flesh” (1:14) He continually provided signs, miracles and lessons to confirm and provide testimony that He was, and IS, indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Here in chapter 11 He shows His power over life and death itself.

¹Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

- **The writer sets the stage for this miraculous event.** We first hear that a man named Lazarus is sick. He lives in Bethany, and his sisters are Mary and Martha. He tells us that it was *that* Mary who had anointed the feet of Jesus in what was considered a somewhat shocking and lavish act of devotion. He does not provide that story here, but will in Chapter 12 (*we will deal with that event at that time*). This same Mary is Lazarus’ brother. This is merely setting the context for the “big event.”
- **Lazarus** is our English equivalent of “Lazaros” in Greek. It is “Elazar” (“God has helped”) in Hebrew.



“Jesus Wept” statue across from Oklahoma City National Memorial. Erected by St. Joseph Catholic Church as a memorial to those (especially the children) killed in the bombing that occurred there on April 19, 1995

³*Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”* ⁴*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.”*

- **Mary and Martha, sisters of the sick man Lazarus, send a note to Jesus.** They do not demand that He come, they merely inform Him. It is likely that Lazarus’ condition was grave when they sent the note, which could have taken quite some time to reach Him. It is also obvious here that these siblings are devoted followers of Jesus, and are loved by Him.
- We must keep in mind that Jesus did not need any note. He knew well in advance even of this situation that Lazarus would be sick, and that he would indeed die. This was a “pre-planned” moment to reveal more of Himself, and to glorify Himself and the Father.
- *“This sickness is not unto death,...”* He says that this sickness won’t end in death. Yet, Lazarus died. But it didn’t end there. Ultimately, he would live again, both physically and spiritually.
- *“... but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”* Just like with the blind man healed in chapter 9, Jesus indicates that this condition (illness and subsequent death) has happened so that God can be glorified, so the Son can indicate His power over all such conditions, even death.

⁵*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.* ⁶*So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*

- What?!!! We are told that Jesus loved this family. And then He stays where He is for two more days? We are expecting Jesus to pack up His things and rush to Lazarus’ side. So, likely, were the sisters who sent Him the note. We don’t know exactly where He is at this moment, but certainly He should be rushing to Bethany, right? This just doesn’t seem to make sense, at least to us at first.
- **Oh, but it does.** It is so wonderful and beautiful and so God-like! As we indicated before, Jesus had this entire event planned from the start. There is nothing taking Him by surprise, or outside of His control. He didn’t need the note from the sisters. There is an amazing reason why He stayed for two more days before heading out to Bethany.
- It is probable that the note sent to Jesus took about 2 days to reach Him. He stayed where He was two more days. This is speculation, but Jesus knew precisely the moment Lazarus would “die.” And He knew precisely what He would do. The extra days were part of the plan. **In Jewish thinking, if a person died, he or she had to be dead for more than 3 days to be “positively” dead, with no chance of recovery.** This is when the body begins to decay in ways obvious to us. The 4th day after death is when decomposition is evident. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead 4 days. All hope for him was gone. He was undeniably, irrevocably dead. This was part of the plan for Jesus to reveal His power over death.
- In other miraculous raisings from the dead, most had taken place shortly after death. For example, the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7), and Jairus’ daughter (Matthew 9) were raised apparently on the same day as the death occurred. All of them are miracles, but this one is the ultimate statement of Jesus’ power. It is also the ultimate statement that no matter decomposition of the body, Jesus has the power to raise back to life. We ALL need to know this and hold that glorious promise!

⁷Then after this He said to the disciples, *“Let us go to Judea again.”* ⁸The disciples said to Him, *“Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”* ⁹Jesus 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.”* ¹⁰*“But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”*

- **Jesus knew exactly when it was time to return to Judea.** He waited two more days and then urged his disciples to accompany Him to Judea, the southern province of the Holy Land where Jerusalem was located.
- *“The disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?’”* Jesus and His disciples had just been in Jerusalem and experienced a number of nasty confrontations with the religious Jews there. The disciples were right to be concerned for their Rabbi, and for themselves. They urged Jesus to reconsider, not knowing what was about to happen. Their hides were in just as much danger as Jesus’. They wanted Jesus to stay away from this region for His safety, and for theirs.
- *“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.”* Jesus is referencing His limited time on this earth. At this point, only He knows that His time is almost come to an end, and He must continue to reveal Himself, and to teach and minister until the very end. While He walked the earth, He was the Light of the World. And while that light was available, it was time to keep working, keep walking. And it was time also for the disciples to understand this, though they could not at this point. They also needed to see Him in action because they would soon become the working “lights” in the darkness that surrounded His leaving.
- This was also a **reminder that God has a plan, and Jesus’ time on earth was fixed.** The Father had given Jesus work to do, and it was not over until He left the earth.
- This statement by Jesus also addresses the fact that He is the Light, and when we walk in Him, stay on His path, and keep listening to His voice, we will not stumble. Walking in the light is easy. Trying to walk in the dark will lead to stumbling, and falling.

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

- The disciples are not quite understanding all that is happening here. Now Jesus says something that didn’t make any sense to them: *“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”* Why would Jesus risk His life, and theirs, to go into a region where they hate Him, merely to wake up someone who is “sleeping?” They didn’t understand Jesus’ use of the word “sleeps,” so He returns to speaking “plainly” so they can understand: *“Lazarus is dead.”* Remember that no one told Jesus this. The note from the sisters merely indicated Lazarus was sick. It is very important for us to remember exactly WHO Jesus is. Not just a man who walked the earth, then died for us.



- **Jesus IS GOD. He is the I AM.** He is omniscient – He knows everything. He knew everything about what was happening then, and He knows everything about what is happening now. He knew everything about Lazarus. He knows everything about you, and about me.
- *“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”* Jesus indicates that it is a good thing He was not there. This was no “accident.” This event was planned. If He were there, He could have prevented Lazarus from dying, yes. Even if He was NOT there, He could have prevented that. We have seen Jesus heal “long-distance.” He has power over sickness, over time and space. But now, these disciples who have seen much already, will be witnesses to His power over life and death.
- *“Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”* These disciples were brave to follow Jesus wherever He went. He was a wanted man. Many people loved Him, but many hated Him and sought His death. Those with Jesus were also risking their lives. Here Thomas bravely says they will go with Him, even it means they die. You can almost hear the resignation in his voice. They have no idea what is about to happen. It is easy to be brave long distance. When Jesus met the guards in the garden the night before His death, ALL the disciples ran away (Matthew 26:56)

¹⁷So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

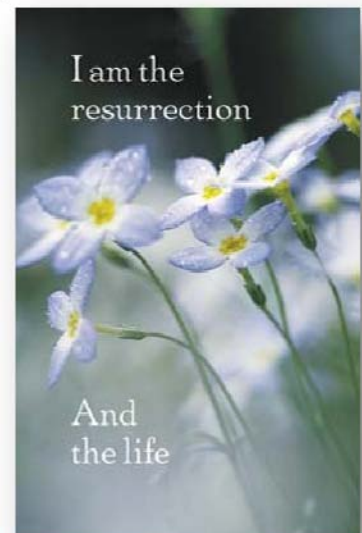
- Once again, it is important to remember that **Jesus did not “find” or discover** the fact that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 4 days. He KNEW this, even before it happened. He knew that Lazarus would die, probably shortly after the note was sent to Him, and He knew how long the trip back to Judea would take, arriving at the “4-day” mark. We must never forget that He is all-knowing, all the time. This was a planned event.
- The town of Bethany was about 2 miles, a short walk, from Jerusalem. The “Jews” here are those religious Jews and leaders of Jerusalem. **Apparently this family was well-known, probably wealthy and influential.** If the religious Jews of Jerusalem have walked to Bethany to “comfort” the sisters, we may assume that they are probably “making an appearance” and here for their own political purposes. They would not have done this were these people mere peasants or workers. This family was important to these Jews. Most likely they have no idea that they support the One these Jews hate. Jesus knew precisely who would be here.
- It was Jewish custom that when someone died, there was 3 days of intense mourning, 4 more days of not-so-intense mourning, followed by an “official” lighter period of mourning for 30 days. It was expected for family and friends to visit during those times.

²⁰Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²“But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” ²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

- It is interesting to note that **this time it is Martha** who runs to meet the Lord. Mary had been the one interested in Jesus’ teaching, while Martha fretted and fumed in the kitchen at some earlier date (Luke 10:39-42). But here Martha runs to meet Jesus. It is likely that Mary didn’t even know of Jesus’ arrival at this point.

- ***“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”*** Martha trusts Jesus. She is a believer. She knows that Jesus could have healed her brother and prevented his death. ***“But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”*** This statement indicates that Martha seemed to hold out some hope for a miraculous resurrection in spite of the fact that Lazarus's body had already begun to decay. Martha has a bad rep for her Mary/Martha story, but she was obviously a woman of faith, and she obviously perceives that Jesus can ask God ANYTHING. It is not clear here whether she yet understands He IS God, but at least she knows there is always hope with Jesus.
- ***“Your brother will rise again.”*** ***Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”*** Jesus tells Martha what will happen, but she misunderstands. As a Jew, she believes that believers will be resurrected at the end of time. Even Job, one of the earliest writers of scripture (Job is the oldest book in the Bible), knew this and proclaimed it: ***“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”*** (Job 19:25-27) Although Martha expressed possible hope for a miracle still, she didn’t understand that Jesus meant NOW, not at the end of time.
- **THE OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION:** Martha is familiar with the scriptural teaching on the resurrection, which appears many places, but prominently in Job and also in Daniel. This teaching was not instituted in the New Testament by Jesus. It has been proclaimed as part of the plan of God since the beginning, and the Jews believed this. The passage from Daniel was well-known: ***“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever....(and verse 13): “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”*** (Daniel 12:1-3)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, ***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”*** ²⁶***“And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*** ²⁷ She said to Him, ***“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”***



- ***“I am the resurrection and the life.”*** This is Jesus' **5th “I AM” statement**. He is the One in whom is the resurrection and the life, that which was spoken of in the Old Testament. Now He adds that He is the One who raises the dead.
- ***“He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”*** He guarantees that those who believe in Him will live eternally. We will physically die, but we will live eternally with Him. Not just as spirits, but as beings with newly created incorruptible bodies that will never die again. He will defeat physical death and physical corruption.
- What Martha and Mary, and all those gathered there are about to see is a foreshadowing of the final resurrection. In this case, however, Lazarus’ life is restored. This is not the final resurrection to eternal life, something far greater.

- **The doctrine of resurrection is a central theme in all scripture.** Believers will be resurrected to live for all eternity with God and the Lamb. It is very well stated in 1 Corinthians 15, and worth including here in this study: ¹ *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,* ² *by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.* ³ *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,* ⁴ *and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,* ⁵ *and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.* ⁶ *After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.* ⁷ *After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.* ⁸ *Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time...* ¹² *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ¹³ *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.* ¹⁴ *And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.* ¹⁵ *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.* ¹⁶ *For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.* ¹⁷ *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!* ¹⁸ *Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ¹⁹ *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.* ²⁰ *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* ²¹ *For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.* ²³ *But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.* ²⁴ *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.* ²⁵ *For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.* ²⁶ *The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.* ²⁷ *For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.* ²⁸ *Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all....* ³⁵ *But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"* ³⁶ *Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ...* ⁴² *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.* ⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* ⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* ⁴⁵ *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* ⁴⁶ *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.* ⁴⁷ *The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.* ⁴⁸ *As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.* ⁴⁹ *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.* ⁵⁰ *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.* ⁵¹ *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³ *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."* ⁵⁵ *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*
- **Do you believe this?** *She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."* Jesus asks if Martha believed what He was saying, though He already knew her heart. He is asking for her sake, not His. Yes, she believed, and here she is also stating that she believed in His identity as the Messiah, the One who will raise all to life again. Still, Martha is probably totally unprepared for what will happen here, although she seems hopeful and expectant. Do we believe, too?

²⁸And 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.” ²⁹As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

- We don’t know what else might have been said between Martha and Jesus at this point, but she seems excited to find out what will happen here and rushes to get her sister. “Secretly” does not mean she was being secretive or deceptive. The word also means “privately.” There were crowds there, and the sisters most likely knew of the confrontations between Jesus and the religious Jews. Martha was being discreet.
- **She references Jesus as “the Teacher.”** The word in Greek is not the same word as Rabbi, a title of respect that denotes a teacher of the Word. This word is literally the “teacher” or “instructor.” Martha has become a learner, too. It was unusual for women to learn the scriptures, and it was not encouraged, though many did. Jesus encouraged everyone to learn from Him. EVERYONE.
- We see from Mary’s response she probably did not know Jesus was coming until now. It says she “rose quickly.” She was probably surprised, excited, and eager to see Him. She is the same Mary of Luke, who sat at His feet thrilled to learn from Him. She knows WHO He is. She can’t wait to see Him and rushes out. From the next verse we know Jesus had not even come into the town. Somehow word of His arrival spread rapidly. Mary rushes to meet Him.
- **Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be told that the Master is asking for you?** Would you not also rush to Him? Well, He is calling you. He is calling all of us. Are we like Mary in our rush to be with Him?

³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹Then 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.”

- Jesus is still outside the town of Bethany where He first met Martha, when Mary rushes out to Him. When the writer says “the Jews” he means the religious Jewish leaders, most likely even some of those who were plotting Jesus’ death. She obviously didn’t tell anyone where she was going. These Jews just assumed that she was going to mourn at the tomb of her brother.
- Notice they follow her. As Mary nears Jesus, there is probably already a crowd of people approaching. She is by now obviously not going to the tomb. Where is she going? They follow. Mary doesn’t care. All she cares about is Jesus.

³²Then, 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.” ³³Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

- ***“Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet...”*** If you have read the Gospels as they describe Mary at various times, you will notice one thing. She is always at His feet! She is in a posture of worship and adoration and humility. She is the servant at her Master’s feet, and that is precisely where all of us need to be.

- ***“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”*** Mary said exactly the same thing that Martha said. Both of them knew Jesus, knew His identity, and knew His power. That is why they sent the note to Him in the first place. They knew He would not have allowed Lazarus to die. They knew He had power over sickness. What they did not know, is that He allowed this to happen for a greater purpose, and their grief would soon turn to joy, as He demonstrated even more power than they imagined. This can be a lesson to us. When God seems absent to us, He is not. He is present, He is listening, and He is powerful. His purposes, however, are greater than ours.



- Jesus watched as this crowd of people approached. They were all weeping. Some were honestly mourning, some may have been overwhelmed at the sight of Jesus, but some were most likely paid mourners (a common practice) hired to weep loudly at the mourning of someone who has died. This was especially common among the wealthier people in the Middle East, and is still practiced in many places there today.
- ***“He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.”*** Jesus is obviously troubled over what He sees. The word for “groaned” here means a deep emotional agitation, even indignation. He was troubled (“stirred up”) about something. But what? We aren’t told here specifically, but what He saw bothered Him a great deal. Of course, many have speculated what He was upset about. We don’t know exactly what upset Jesus at this point, but perhaps all of these, and more, were on His mind:
 - seeing some who were there only for appearances (remember, the “Jews” followed Mary, Jesus knew their dark hearts)
 - the tragedy of the death of a loved one. Jesus loved this family, and grieved as well for Lazarus
 - the people’s inability to understand who He really is, One with power over death
 - ultimately, the effects of sin – death and corruption.

³⁴And He said, ***“Where have you laid him?”*** They said to Him, ***“Lord, come and see.”***
³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then the Jews said, ***“See how He loved him!”*** ³⁷And some of them said, ***“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”***

- ***“Jesus wept.”*** This statement is fairly well known because it is **the shortest verse in the Bible**. The Greek for “wept” here is not the kind of loud, showy grief and moaning. It means a quiet weeping, a shedding of tears. The “Jews” who were carefully watching everything Jesus did misinterpreted this weeping. They believed He mourned as others did at Lazarus’ death. Why would that be? In a few minutes He would raise Lazarus back to life. We are not told WHY He wept. However, we can speculate that it could have been for any one of the reasons presented earlier, and including the unbelief, or limited belief, of those observing Him. Jesus shows His humanity here, and in a moment He will reveal His deity as the Resurrection and Life, with power over death. But even then some will refuse to believe.

- ***“Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”*** “Some of them” may indicate the religious Jews, or just the crowds gathered at the home to mourn. It is interesting that the incident of Jesus’ healing of the blind man keeps coming up. This obviously impressed many. They offered the thought again that Jesus probably could have prevented this tragedy. Perhaps they overheard both Martha and Mary make this statement as well. Some obviously had faith, or at least the beginnings of belief at this point. It’s about time. They have witnessed God walking among them.

³⁸*Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.* ³⁹*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.”* ⁴⁰*Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”*

- **This is the third time we hear of how troubled Jesus was by all this.** First He groans in a troubled way, then He weeps, now He is again “groaning in Himself.” The Greek word for “groaning” is *embrimanomai*, which literally means to be indignant, sighing with chagrin, being upset or against something. So what is Jesus so “chagrined” about? His people didn’t really get who He is. They didn’t understand that He is the Word “who was with God, who was God” from the beginning (*the first verse of this book*). And as God, Jesus had ultimate power over death. This crowd doesn’t seem to know this. Even Martha and Mary had a limited understanding of His true identity and power. Perhaps the thing that troubled Him most, however, is what sin has done to the perfection of His creation.
- Martha objects to taking away the stone because the body of Lazarus, now dead four days, would be a mighty stink. Although she seemed hopeful initially, she does not seem to understand what Jesus can do, and what He is about to do.
- ***“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”*** Apparently there was more to the conversation between Jesus and Martha than what we are told. He seems to have apparently told Martha that she would see the glory of God in all this. Perhaps she still thought that applied to the last day when God would raise all the dead. But Jesus was speaking of now, this moment, when all of them gathered there would indeed see the glory of Jesus – God Himself.

⁴¹*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.”* ⁴²*“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.”*

- ***“I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.”*** This is a public miracle (*unlike when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee, which was a private miracle intended for His disciples only, to strengthen their faith and understanding of Him*). Jesus prayed audibly so that everyone could hear Him call upon the Father, and believe that God the Father sent His Son Jesus into the world, and that Jesus had the same power as the Father and shared His nature.
- In this prayer, Jesus is demonstrating His oneness with the Father in every way. His character, His power, His purpose and His works are shared by Jesus. And when Jesus does what He is about to do, the people should understand this.

⁴³Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come forth!**”
⁴⁴And 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.**”

- We have seen Jesus use various methods to heal people, each designed with a specific purpose and lesson. However, **when He raised the dead, it was always in the same way. He called them and spoke to them as if they could hear Him.** They DID! One day He will return with a shout, and call believers back from the dead.
- Some have asked why **Jesus addressed Lazarus by name**, rather than just giving the command to rise. We have seen that the dead respond to God's voice, and if Jesus had not made the command to Lazarus personal, ALL the dead would have responded to His command and been raised! (early church father Augustine was the first one to mention this possibility).
- **Jesus has actually performed a number of miracles here.** Did you notice that when Lazarus “appeared” he was not sick? Not only was he raised from the dead, he was healed of his illness. And, if he was wrapped head to foot in grave clothes, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for him to get up and walk out the cave entrance. Jesus knew exactly what He would do by speaking this man’s name.
- **COMMENTARY: ... these people were raised from the dead but were not resurrected. Rather, it was a restoration to life. Resurrection is this: “... It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body ...” (1 Cor. 15:42–44). These people were raised from the dead, but none of them were given glorified bodies. They all faced death again. Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep. His is the only true resurrection—“... Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23).**
- From chapter 12 we know that Lazarus became an instant “celebrity” sought by many people for various reasons. Some just wanted to see the man that had been dead (even stinking dead!) and was now alive. Others wanted to see him because he was a threat to them, just as much as Jesus was, because he was a living testimony to the power of Jesus. Because of this, his life was in danger. Instead of believing, the Jews wanted to kill Lazarus also.
- **Some people have done some fascinating studies regarding the authorship of this Gospel,** because of this incident and many other interesting little “clues.” This is not the place to present those lengthy studies. However, consider this:
 - Nowhere in this Gospel does the writer mention his name. The only “John” mentioned is John the Baptist. We have assumed John the disciple to be the writer for various reasons, all speculation.
 - The disciple John wrote the book of Revelation, and mentioned that fact several times so the author is clearly known.
 - The writer of this book is referenced as “the disciple Jesus loved.”
 - In a “parable” told by Jesus a man named “Lazarus” is mentioned in a unique way, as even if he came back from the dead, the brothers of the rich man would not believe him. In all of Jesus other parables, he does not mention people by name. Some believe this “story” is actually **prophecy** (see Luke 16) of the event in this chapter, and of the subsequent unbelief of the religious Jews.



- This amazing display of Jesus' power is not told in any of the other Gospels. This seems a bit odd, since it was one of the most important revelations of His power. Why would it be left out?
- When Jesus is on trial, the writer of this Gospel is allowed entrance to the council as they interrogated Him. The scripture tells us he was "known" to the high priest and allowed to enter. How on earth would a fisherman from Galilee (John) be known to the high priest in Jerusalem? Lazarus, being wealthy and influential, would have been known in Jerusalem, since Bethany was only 2 miles away.
- In chapter 21 of this book, Peter asks an odd question about "the disciple Jesus loved." It would seem out of place if he was asking about the disciple John, but natural if he were asking about the subject of this miraculous event in this chapter.
- The writer of this Gospel specifically mentioned that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus (v. 5).

These are just some of the things that lead some people to **speculate that John the disciple did not write this Gospel, but it was in fact written by none other than Lazarus**. His life after his restoration was on the run, in hiding, since the Pharisees also wanted to kill him. This probably would have been that way even after Jesus returned to heaven. The Jews were doing all they could to quash this new movement "The Way," and Lazarus' testimony was pretty impressive. Lazarus was also most likely wealthy and well-known, allowing him resources and open doors to tell his story. To continue teaching of the power of Jesus, however, he would have to do so in an "underground" way. Perhaps this is why the author does not mention his name. Perhaps this is why this event is not told in the other Gospels as they wrote shortly after Jesus' death and Lazarus' life was in danger. Jesus may have entrusted the care of His mother into Lazarus' hands. This would make sense, as he was wealthy and able to care for her. There are a number of intriguing "clues" about this speculation. Scripture does not prove or disprove any of this. It is entirely possible that this Gospel should be called Lazarus, rather than John, written by the very one who was returned to life by Jesus. There is much scholarly work out there on this subject, both pro and con. We'll let you check it out on your own and make your own decision! There are always treasures to find when we dig deep in the Word! *(We should note that either way, the words of this Gospel are the truth, authored ultimately by the Holy Spirit).*

- We are only about halfway through this Gospel, yet **with this miraculous act the public ministry of Jesus is over**. It began when John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Lamb of God, and here it is finished. This Gospel writer spent as much time and ink on the final two days of Jesus' life as he did on the first 32+ years. All the Gospel writers followed this pattern. The emphasis of teaching is on the final few days of Jesus' life, the time He spent in focused teaching with His disciples, and then His death and resurrection. For those of us who also follow Him, His disciples, the material in these chapters is also addressed to us. These are lessons for disciples. The obvious emphasis on His death and resurrection is to underscore the importance of the earthly work of Jesus, the sacrifice for our sins – the Lamb of God.

⁴⁵Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. ⁴⁶But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. ⁴⁷Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. ⁴⁸"If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

- ***“Then many of the Jews ... believed in Him.”*** Not ALL the “Jews” (the religious leaders) rejected Jesus. Here we are told many of them believed. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and many other Pharisees and Jewish leaders believed in Yeshua HaMashiach – Jesus the Messiah. We should not get the idea that ALL Jews rejected Jesus. Many believed, and most likely went on to become dedicated disciples, saved by their acceptance of the Lamb of God.
- ***“But some of them went away to the Pharisees...”*** You would think that standing in the presence of the Creator of the Universe, an eye witness to a stinking corpse being raised to vibrant life again would make a believer out of you. Yes, we hear many did believe. Now this statement. What???? Some of these guys rushed back to the religious Jews (those obviously who were not there to witness this event) to tell them the latest gossip about Jesus. What on earth would make some who were there to see this restoration of life with their own eyes not believe, and only think about how to tattle on Jesus to those who wanted to kill Him? Self. Pride. Arrogance. It didn’t matter what Jesus did, He was a threat to their power, and their self-centered pride. He had to go, no matter who He was.



- ***“Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council...”*** Throughout the Gospels **the Pharisees are seen as Jesus’ main opponents**. Although they thought very highly of themselves, and the people feared them, they really lacked the political power they would need to get rid of Jesus. Enter the chief priests. These are the guys hooked up with Rome, having the inside track and political clout. They are the ones now prominent in the events that led up to Jesus’ crucifixion. These groups are now conspiring together.
- **The word for “council” here is *sunedrion*, or in English, Sanhedrin.** The Sanhedrin was the ancient Jewish court system, a religious body in Israel during the time of the Temple. There were often smaller religious Sanhedrins in every town, but the one in Jerusalem was the “Great Sanhedrin.” This is described as a group of 71 “sages” who met at any time there was a need to establish local law, both in civil matters and religious matters. They acted sort of like a Supreme Court. There have been some attempts to re-establish a Sanhedrin today.
- **As this “council” convened, their intent was evil.** The chief priests were mostly Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, or any miracles of the “supernatural” type. They would have been particularly disdainful and disbelieving of the miracle of raising Lazarus back to life. They were the liberals, as we would call them today. The Pharisees were the “right wingers,” the conservatives. The Sadducees and the Pharisees generally despised each other and were opposed in almost every matter, except this one. They were united in their hatred of Jesus, and joined forces to kill Him.

⁴⁹*And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰“nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.*



- As the high priest, **Caiaphas was the most influential member of the Sanhedrin**, or council, the highest ruling body of the Jews. He had great authority, and with his alliances with Rome was a political power broker.
- During the Roman occupation, **high priests were appointed by Rome, at Rome's desire**. Most agree that the high priests during this era actually bought their way into the position, and were not the God-ordained Levitical priesthood of the family of Aaron. From 37 AD to 67 AD, about 30 years, the empire appointed at least 28 men to this position. Caiaphas was in this role for 18 of those years, a remarkable feat, and a tribute to his political savvy and his friendship with Rome.
- ***"You know nothing at all,..."*** This remark was typical for a Sadducee, as they were known for their pompous, arrogant and rude attitudes. In fact, the historian Josephus said that Sadducees *"in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens."*
- **Caiaphas has no idea what he is doing here**. He is attempting to present a solution to their problem. He says that if Jesus is allowed to live, their nation will die at Rome's hand. So, in the interest of the entire nation of Israel (which really did not exist at that time!), the only solution is to kill Jesus. One man dies, but an entire nation survives. Unknowingly, Caiaphas is uttering a profound prophecy. That was not his intent, of course, but his words summarize the truth of Jesus' substitutionary atonement for all mankind.
- Because of Jesus' growing popularity, **Caiaphas and the other religious Jews feared they would lose their power**, and Rome would have to use troops to re-establish order, and perhaps even remove any existing power they had allowed the Jews to have up to this point. They could not risk losing that. We are not sure they feared really for the nation of Israel, but rather for their own power, authority and pride.
- ***"Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,..."*** The writer of this Gospel comments that Caiaphas' words were not his own, that God authorized these words, and the writer recognized that it was indeed prophecy.
- **COMMENTARY: We find a strange thing here: Caiaphas' accurate prediction because he was high priest that year! Caiaphas was a scheming politician, and later we will meet his father-in-law Annas, who was also a mean rascal and the power behind the throne. That Caiaphas had the gift of prophecy should not fool us. Like Balaam in the Old Testament, this rascal could utter a true prophecy.** (McGee) *(even people who do not know God at all are used by Him!)*

⁵³*Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.* ⁵⁴*Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.*

- **Caiaphas spear-headed a well thought out plot** in which Jesus was arrested, an illegal trial was held, and false evidence was brought against him (Matthew 26:3–4, 57–68). They successfully played Pilate the Roman governor and Herod the Jewish King against each other, and also whipped up the people into a mob (Luke 22:66–23:25), which led to Jesus' conviction and His execution on a cruel cross.
- For the Pharisees, their participation in this plot would have probably been for "religious" purposes, to take care of the "blasphemer" who threatened the Jewish way of belief (*actually that is just a cover for pride!*). Sadducees involvement would have been merely political. The things Jesus did, like healing on the Sabbath, didn't particularly interest or bother them, as they did the Pharisees. These are strictly political animals.

- It is exciting to note that **this group’s attempts to put an end to the “Jesus Movement” failed miserably.** Yes, they succeeded in getting Jesus killed, but that was only by the will of God. It was what God sent Jesus to earth for in the first place, and they never would have succeeded if God had not already ordained it.
- After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the disciples began seriously preaching the good news of Jesus in Jerusalem, and beyond, with huge success. They also were performing miracles that captured the attention, and the hearts, of those who witnessed them (see Acts 3:1-4:13).
Man cannot thwart the plans of God!
- **After this, Jesus moved with His disciples** to a small town about 15 miles to the north, called Ephraim. There was a pre-ordained time for Jesus to die (on Passover, at precisely the moment the lambs were slaughtered in the Temple) and it was not yet that time. He would die in His own time, and He (not anyone else) controlled that, so He withdrew for private teaching with His disciples.
- We are not told of any further “public” ministry by Jesus after this time. However, wherever there was a need, Jesus ministered. We can be sure that He did not go one day or one moment without restoring the people who sought Him.

⁵⁵And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. ⁵⁶Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?” ⁵⁷Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

- *“And the Passover of the Jews was near...”* And now Passover is right around the corner, the time when Jesus would die for the sins of the whole world. We are approaching His final week on earth.
- As people came to Jerusalem for the required pilgrimage feast, there was much speculation about Him. **Would he come? Would He stay away for His own protection?** It seems that even the people knew what the Sanhedrin was up to. There was much support for Jesus. But among the leadership, that was not the case.
- The chief priests and the Pharisees had put out their version of “wanted posters” for Jesus. Anyone who saw Him was to report it. Why? So they could arrest Him. There was probably a reward offered as incentive. These guys are on the hunt, and won’t give up until Jesus is hanging from the cross.

COMMENTARY: You would think that this crowning miracle would have turned these skeptics to Jesus, but it did not. Our Lord had said previously, you remember, “... If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). That is the reason that God does not rend the heavens and come down in spectacular display. That is the reason God does not go about performing miracles today. After the church leaves the earth, during the Great Tribulation period, and into the Millennium, there will be a period of great miracles, but even that will not convince people. Today we are asked in a quiet way to put our trust in Him even though the mob and the majority turn from Him. People complain that the crowd isn’t going after Jesus. Friend, it never did! He died, He was buried, He rose again from the dead, and that is the gospel. We don’t need a miracle. The problem is not in the lack of evidence. The problem is the unbelief of man.



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