

## Raising of Lazarus: Jesus as Resurrection & Life, Israel's Restoration

### *John 11*

**John 11.** In this chapter we have fresh glories of the Son brought forward. We see His perfection as a man, touched with the feelings of our infirmities. All through we read of “Jesus”, the loving, compassionate, gentle Savior. Then, we have His zeal for the glory of God. He put the Father’s glory above every other goal. Finally, we see His personal, divine glory displayed in raising Lazarus from the dead! This was the most outstanding miracle that Jesus ever did. It was the Father’s answer to the Son’s rejection on earth. The Father saw that it was time for His Son’s glory to be declared; but the Son would not assert it of His own accord. What perfection! So great as He is, the Eternal Son is nonetheless deeply interested in the sorrows and cares of His creatures.

**Jesus, the Perfect Man.** All through this chapter we have the actions of “Jesus”, the Savior. We see Jesus *heard* (v.4) of the sickness. Jesus *loved* (v.5) them all with a perfect love. Jesus *came* (v.17) at just the right moment. Jesus *saw* (v.33) Mary weeping. Jesus *groaned* (v.33) at the effects of sin. Jesus *wept* (v.35) in sorrow. Jesus *said* (v.39) “take away the stone”. And finally, Jesus *cried with a loud voice* (v.43).

Thy name encircles every grace  
That God as man could show;  
There only could He fully trace  
A life divine below.

Jesus—it speaks a life of love,  
Of sorrows meekly borne;  
It tells of sympathy above,  
Whatever makes us mourn.<sup>1</sup>

**John 11 - 12** really form one continuous subject; the final days of the Lord’s public ministry in Israel. After this, Jesus enters into a private room with His disciples and instructs them. After that, He goes to the cross. Up to this point we have seen a great deal of the rejection of Christ by the Jews, concluding with the announcement that His true sheep will hear His voice. In these two chapters we have a little company of those who love the Shepherd, and

hear His voice. Bethany figures strongly in these two chapters; the little town and the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, where Jesus just seemed to feel at home. Each time He would journey to Jerusalem, He would stop there and receive refreshment on His journey. In ch.12 we learn that His final journey to Jerusalem was no exception. Bethany means “house of figs” or “house of dates”, and spiritually it was a place where the Lord could always find a little fruit. An alternative definition for Bethany is “house of affliction”. Certainly, affliction was no stranger in that house. Even before the sickness of Lazarus, the head of the home had suffered deeply, for in other Gospels we learn that it was the home of “Simon the leper”. Simon was either the father of the three siblings, or perhaps the husband of Martha. Here in ch.11 we see that the sheep are troubled by the effects of sin, and we see the Shepherd’s care for His sheep in sympathizing with their grief, before He took away the cause of it with His power. The Shepherd is able to deal with not only the wolf and the stranger, but also with the trials and cares of this life. Yet the hatred of the Jews is no less in these chapters. The raising of Lazarus was the last great witness to the Jews of the Lord’s Deity. The more Jesus’ glory shone forth, the more their hatred grew. But the raising of Lazarus also served to strengthen the disciples in view of His own impending death. We get the Lord glorified in three ways:

1. As *Son of God* in the raising of Lazarus (John 11:4, 42)
2. As *Son of David* (King of Israel) at the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13)
3. As *Son of Man* when sought by Greeks at the Feast (John 12:23)

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# Setting: The Lord Delays His Departure for Bethany, Lazarus Dies (11:1-16)

## The Sickness of Lazarus (vv.1-4)

### CHAPTER 11

**1** Now there was a certain *man* sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and Martha her sister. **v.1** The town of Bethany may have been famous for many natural reasons, but it was known to God by the sheep who lived there! How precious; “*the village of Mary and Martha her sister*”. As we already mentioned, Bethany means “house of figs” or “house of dates”, and spiritually it was a place where the Lord could always find a little fruit. The Lord often stopped there on His journeys for refreshment, and He loved these three dearly. Now sickness had invaded their home, and Lazarus was gravely ill. Lazarus is an interesting character. We never read one word that he spoke, and yet his troubled life brought tremendous glory to God by the miracle Jesus did in it. Lazarus is known as a friend of Jesus, and one who sat at the table with Him.

**2** It was *the Mary* who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. **v.2** John the Evangelist assumes that the reader is already familiar with an incident from the earlier accounts (Matt. 26:9, Mark 14:3), John of course writing much later than the other evangelists. John will write of the event in the next chapter (John 12:2). The Lord is outside of time... He inhabits eternity! Even though this event occurs in ch.12, it is mentioned here because Mary’s selfless expression of worship is what Jesus connected her with morally, in answer to Matt. 26:13.

**3** The sisters therefore sent to him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. **v.3** These sisters went to the right Person. When we think of the Lord’s incredible foreknowledge in this chapter, we can see that Jesus did not need to be told that Lazarus was sick. But He delights to hear His own coming to Him in dependence. How different from the woman in Luke 8 who had spent all her living upon physicians to no avail, before coming to the Lord. Of course, there is nothing wrong with using doctors, per the Lord’s own words (Matt. 9:12), but our faith ought to be in the Lord and not the physicians. Notice how sweetly the sisters word their brief message. They do not tell the Lord what to do (e.g. “Lord, *heal* our brother”), rather they simply tell Him what had happened, and they rest in His love. They do not even use their brother’s name, but simply refer to him as “*he whom*

*thou lovest*". What an example this is! We should view one another and pray for one another as he or she whom the Lord loves. They do not even appeal on the basis of their own needs (e.g. "Lord, behold, he whom *we love* is sick"), nor on the grounds of their love for the Lord (e.g. "Lord, *we who love you* and have done you many kindnesses, now have a need"), but simply raise before the Lord in prayer the object of the Lord's own affections. The word here is 'phileo' love, indicating a deep bond of fellowship between Lazarus and the Lord.

**4** But when Jesus heard *it*, he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.* **v.4** The Lord's response is interesting. Every trial the Lord allows in our life is an opportunity to bring glory to God. The trial might end in death, but it is "*not unto death*", meaning that there is a higher purpose to it. Death is not the end in view. The death of Lazarus was but an *opportunity* for the glory of God to be manifested. The trials that overtake God's people become the occasion for the display of the glory of God. This is the highest view we can have of our trials. It might be by His *delivering* power out of the trial, or by His *sustaining* power through the trial. Instead of asking "*how* can I get out of this trial?" we should ask "*what* can I get out of this trial?" Suffering is often something God uses to prepare us to be used for His glory. Ultimately, the Son of God would be glorified when His life-giving power was exercised to raise Lazarus from the dead (see John 5:28-29). Resurrection power is the ultimate proof of deity; proof that Jesus was the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). The Lord had raised others from the dead: the ruler's daughter (Matt. 9:23), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11), but both were in the north of the land... this miracle was done on the very doorstep of Jerusalem. The three form an interesting progression; a "little one" (Mark 5:41), a young man, and now a full grown man. Also, this resurrection was after four days, when bodily decomposition had taken place. The only possible explanation for the events of this chapter is that God had visited His people in the Person of His Son.

## The Lord's Delayed Departure (vv.5-10)

**5** Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. **v.5** The word used here by Spirit is 'agápe' love, compared to 'phileo' love in the message of the two sisters (v.3). The Lord's love for us is always deeper than our love for Him! What a comfort. Also, it does not say the Lord loved "the three" or "the family", but He lists each one by name! His love for us is individual and special.

**6** When therefore he heard, He is sick, he remained two days then in the place where he was. **v.6** This seems like a very strange response for the Lord. It says that "*when he had heard, 'He is sick', he remained two days more.*" It sounds like Jesus was waiting for

Lazarus to die! That is true. Our human minds struggle with the notion that the Creator of the universe could love us, and though He has all power at His disposal, would then leave us in our sickness and trial. The answer is in v.4. Our minds do not rise up to the purpose of a sovereign God, who allows evil temporarily that His glory might shine forth in brighter splendor. It was not a lack of sympathy that caused the Lord to delay His departure, but His care for the glory of God. His love is wiser than we can ever understand. This is the answer to the philosophical “problem of evil”. God’s delays are not necessarily denials. We need to have patience. See notes on vv.21-22.

Thus we see why evil is permitted; for the greater manifestation of the glory of God, for the everlasting strength and comfort of His saints.<sup>2</sup>

**7** Then after this he says to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. **8** The disciples say to him, Rabbi, *even but now the Jews sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?*

**vv.7-8** The Lord, walking in perfect communion with His Father, announced calmly that it was time to go to Judea. The disciples recoil from the thought of walking back into the danger zone. Repeated attempts had been made on the Lord’s life in Judea (John 7:1; 30; John 8:59), but what they refer to here is the recent attempt to stone the Lord in the winter time, only months earlier (John 10:31; 39). Those events were fresh in the disciples’ minds, and they may have thought the Lord was either forgetful or reckless. It is possible that each time He escaped, they thought the Lord had gotten “lucky”, and feared the day when His “luck” would run out. The Lord’s response totally sets these false notions aside. While the Lord was doing the Father’s will, there was absolutely nothing that could hinder Him.

**9** Jesus answered, *Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walk in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world; 10 but if any one walk in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.* **vv.9-10** The Lord answers the disciples both to calm their fears, and to teach us a valuable principle. For Jesus, there was no risk - nothing to fear - because He was walking in the will of His Father. In that sense, it was “day”. The day is a continuous period of light from the sun... the working day is made up of twelve hours. Apart from an eclipse or a storm, it doesn’t get dark until the day is over. By asking the rhetorical question, “*Are there not twelve hours in the day?*” the Lord was showing that He was walking in the will of God, and in that path there was nothing that could hinder Him. The same is true for every disciple. When we are yielded to God, a task is assigned to every hour of our day. Nothing can frustrate our accomplishing those tasks if they are truly from God. Jesus knew that, back in Jerusalem, even if the Jews tried to stone Him again, it was impossible for them to succeed. Every child of God is immortal till his work is done (Rev. 11:7). Therefore, to know God’s will is imperative; to have a single eye, so that our “*whole body shall be full of light*” (Matt. 6:22). Without it, we are in the night, and we are

sure to stumble in the path.

## The Death of Lazarus (vv.11-16)

**11** These things said he; and after this he says to them, Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. **12** The disciples therefore said to him, Lord, if he be fallen asleep, he will get well. **13** But Jesus spoke of his death, but “they” thought that he spoke of the rest of sleep. **vv.11-13** Having shown that the hatred of the Jews was no obstacle to Him, Jesus now reveals His purpose for going into Judea. His disciples completely misunderstood Him. Even if they had surmised the meaning of “*Lazarus... is fallen asleep*”, the Lord’s statement about waking him out of sleep would have pushed them over the edge. Why? Because resurrection is a glory which belongs only to God (John 5:21). Therefore, they interpreted Jesus’ words shallowly, because they could not accept the deeper meaning. They thought Jesus has meant “*the rest of sleep*”, but Jesus was using the word “sleep” as a metaphor for the death of saints, as it is often used in scripture; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13-15; 1 Thess. 5:10; 2 Pet. 3:4. It always refers to the state of the believer’s body... never their soul after death. That is because scripture teaches the consciousness of the soul even in [the intermediate state](#).

Sleep is often used to describe the death of a believer, although it is never used to describe the death of an unbeliever. The original word is *ekoimethesan*; "a sleep that is induced by another". In 1 Thess. 4 we learn who it is that has induced the sleep... the Lord Jesus. What a precious thought! Death is not an accident. Jesus puts His saints to sleep, and He will wake them up with His own voice (John 5:28-29)! Scripture does not teach "soul-sleep", that a person is unconscious in the intermediate state. Both the rich man and Lazarus were conscious in the intermediate state (Luke 16:19-31). Those who teach "soul-sleep" leverage scriptures like Ecc. 9:5 ("for the dead know nothing") which speaks of the ignorance of the dead. That really speaks of ignorance as to things on earth; that which is "under the sun". No! Unbelievers who have died are conscious in their suffering, and believers who have died are "present with the Lord".

Their misunderstanding led them to think that Lazarus was still alive, and that sleep would improve his condition. Lazarus in this chapter is a type of Israel, which has sunken down into national sleep. No amount of “resting” will improve their moral condition before God. The first man cannot be improved. The passage of time only results in more stink. Divine intervention is needed; resurrection power (Ezek. 37:1-10).

**14** Jesus therefore then said to them plainly, Lazarus has died. **15** And I rejoice on your account that I was not there, in order that ye may believe. But let us go to him. **vv.14-15** The Lord now “plainly” clears their misunderstandings; “Lazarus is dead”. If the Lord had been there, He certainly could have healed His beloved friend. Yet Jesus rejoiced that He had been absent, so that an opportunity for the display of greater power might open up, that the disciples might be strengthened in their faith. The Lord did not come merely to prevent death; rather He came to triumph over death! The fact that the Lord allows sickness in the lives of His own to result in death does not indicate that He is powerless or careless. Rather it shows that He has something much greater is store.

**16** Thomas therefore, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let “us” also go, that we may die with him. **v.16** Thomas was a disciple that had much affection for Christ, but had a pessimistic personality. We see this in v.16, where Thomas gloomily views the prospect of going to Judea as certain death. He saw no other outcome than that Jesus would be killed by the Jews, and he was resigned to join the Lord in martyrdom death. How little Thomas comprehended purposes and devotion of his Master. Thomas viewed himself as making a great sacrifice, doing a great thing for the Lord by going with Him into the jaws of death. The truth was that the Lord was making a far greater sacrifice for Thomas; going to go into death for Thomas, to pay for Thomas’s sins on the cross. Nonetheless, Thomas’s devotion is genuine, and the Lord appreciated it very much. Paul said a similar thing in Acts 21:13, when the disciples tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. He was prepared to die for Christ!

## Conversation With Mary and Martha (11:17-32)

### The Lord’s Arrival in Bethany (vv.17-19)

**17** Jesus therefore *on* arriving found him to have been four days already in the tomb. **18** Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia off, **19** and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, that they might console them concerning their brother. **vv.17-19** The Lord’s arrival after Lazarus had been dead four days is significant. The Lord had raised others from the dead: the ruler’s daughter (Matt. 9:23), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11), but this resurrection was after four days, when bodily decomposition had taken place. There was no denying the reality of Lazarus’s death, nor of his coming forth from the

grave again. Also, there was a Jewish tradition that said a person's spirit would hang around the body for three days after death, and after that the spirit would leave. Therefore, it was customary for visitors to pay respects within three days, as we read that "*many Jews came to Mary and Martha*". It is possible (though not certain) that the Lord waited an extra day for *added* sureness of the sign to the Jews. Another difference between this miracle and the other resurrections was that both others were in the north of the land... this miracle was done on the very doorstep of Jerusalem; "*about fifteen stadia [1.7 miles] off*".

## Conversation with Martha (vv.20-28)

**20** Martha then, when she heard Jesus is coming, went to meet him; but Mary sat in the house. **v.20** The first great distinction between Martha and Mary is seen in v.20. They reflect the two responses that we can have to the Lord when a trial comes in. The more natural response is to "do something", like Martha. The more spiritual response is to "sit still" and trust the sovereign love of God for us, like Mary. However, we must not be too hard on Martha, for we see in her that character of impetuosity so common in the greatest servants of Christ. Martha was a "doer", and was hard pressed to sit still in the house. Nevertheless, this personality trait hindered Martha at times from enjoying the "best part" (Luke 10), and we can take a lesson from that.

**21** Martha therefore said to Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; **22** but even now I know, that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. **vv.21-22** In Martha's posture and words to the Lord, we can almost detect tones of accusation, or at least frustration. She knew perfectly well that Jesus could have made the journey in time to save her brother's life. Contrast this tone with Mary's in v.32. We must learn that the Lord's timing is perfect. He doesn't come too soon that we miss out on the blessing of trusting in the dark. Nor does He come too late that we experience the misery of trusting in vain. Yet Martha still retains a measure of faith. She knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God (v.27), and that He could "petition", and the Father would give whatever to Him. She meant to express the highest degree of confidence in Him, but instead revealed the shortcoming of her thoughts. Her thoughts fell far short of the true import of His Divinity. She used this word 'request' which is never used to describe the Lord's prayers to the Father. A different word is used, as in John 17. Jesus was not merely a deputy or representative who had to "petition" for things in order to have them; He WAS the Person that could give life. Hence, the Lord's statement in v.25. How patient the Lord was with those who did not grasp the greatness of His Person!

**23** Jesus says to her, Thy brother shall rise again. **24** Martha says to him, I know that he will



rise again in the resurrection in the last day. **vv.23-24** Patiently, the Lord speaks to enlighten her about the greatness of His Person. “No Martha, my coming means that your brother’s death will be defeated!” She cannot get ahold of it. Her mind goes to the highest truth the Jews had about the resurrection; that of a general resurrection at the last day. The coming of the Son marked a great change with regard to the truth of resurrection. Not longer was a “general resurrection” to be thought of merely, where those with and without faith are raised together. Instead, a “*resurrection from among the dead*”, where those of faith are raised first, while the wicked dead remain in the grave for the “*last day*”. Lazarus is a picture of this kind of resurrection, but not really a part of it, because Lazarus died again some years later.

**The resurrection.** There is a progression of understanding through scripture with regard to the resurrection. Old Testament saints knew of a general resurrection, that is all (John 11:24). The resurrection was spoken of in the Old Testament, but not in great detail (see 1 Samuel 2:6; Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9,10; Psalm 17:15; and Daniel 12:2). When Christ came He presented something new, that there would be a “*resurrection from among the dead*” (Matt. 17:9); i.e. that not all would be raised together. Christ Himself was the one who first taught this distinction; having “*brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*” (2 Tim. 1:10). He taught that the resurrection would have two parts; that those of faith would rise first, and then later those without faith would be raised for judgment (John 5:29). The “two resurrections” have several names:

- The resurrection of *life* and the resurrection of *judgment* (John 5:29)
- The resurrection of the *just* and the resurrection of the *unjust* (Acts 24:15)
- The *first* resurrection [and the *second* death] (Rev. 20:5)

Paul adds even more detail which he got [by revelation](#): Christ would rise first, and then those that are Christ’s at His coming would rise (1 Cor. 15:23). Paul explained that some will rise at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18), but he did not explain that another phase will occur at the Appearing. We learn, by joining Rev. 20:4 and Rev. 14:13, that the tribulation martyrs will form the last phase of the first resurrection. In Rev. 20:5, a detail is added as to the space of time between the end of the first resurrection and that of the wicked dead; the space would be 1000 years, or a “millennium”. While details are successively added throughout scripture, the later details *do not contradict* the earlier statements. Such is the perfection of scripture!

**25** Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live; **26** and every one who lives and believes on me shall never die. Believest thou this? **27** She says to him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son

of God, who should come into the world. **vv.25-27** The Lord explicitly states the truth of His Person, *"I am the resurrection and the life"*. This is one of the great ["I am" statements](#) of John's gospel. In His Person was life (John 1:4)... He didn't have to ask for life-giving power. The life of Christ is so great, that it is not possible for death to hold it (Acts 2:24). That life springs up over every obstacle including death, therefore it is the resurrection as well as the life. This fact was proven in the raising of Lazarus, in the Lord's own resurrection, and will be manifested again at the rapture when the sleeping saints are raised and changed, before being caught up to be forever with the Lord (1 Thess, 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-57). If anyone believes on this great Person, *"though he have died (physically), shall live (physically)"*; this answers to *"I am the resurrection"*. Furthermore, and more importantly, *"every one who lives (spiritually) and believes on me shall never die (spiritually)"*; this answers to *"I am the life"*. Not only will a believer be raised from the dead, but they will never die the second death! He is *"the resurrection"* in relation to the *body*, and *"the life"* in relation to the *soul*. Did Martha believe all this? She really did not get it in her mind, as we see from her response. She responds with a generic confession of the Lord's Person; *"thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world"*, which was all very true and wonderful, but she did not grasp the significance of His being the Son of God. Perhaps we have all experienced this before, when someone is trying to explain spiritual truth to us that goes over our head, and we just mutter a statement of truth (e.g. "Yes, God is truly amazing", etc.) because we want to agree, but just don't understand.

**28** And having said this, she went away and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, The teacher is come and calls thee. **v.28** Martha immediately leaves Jesus and goes for Mary. Interestingly, there is no indication that the Lord called for Mary. It would seem that Martha knew the Lord's words could be better processed by Mary, who had a more meditative and understanding mind, perhaps because of her habit of sitting at the Lord's feet (Luke 10:39-42). J.N. Darby said:

Martha tells her, "The Master is come and calleth for thee" - like saying, "He is talking about what I do not understand, and you must come."<sup>3</sup>

## Conversation with Mary (vv.29-32)

**29** She, when she heard *that*, rises up quickly and comes to him. **30** Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was in the place where Martha came to meet him. **31** The Jews therefore who were with her in the house and consoling her, seeing Mary that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, She goes to the tomb, that she may weep there. **vv.29-31** Both sisters came to the Lord, but they came in different ways. Martha came of

her own accord, and Mary waited until she was called. The Jews misunderstood where Mary was headed. They were doing the best they could to comfort Mary, but they could not meet the needs of her heart; so she goes to the only One who could. The Lord was in the same place that Martha had met Him, as if Mary would pick up where Martha left off.

**32** Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, seeing him, fell at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. **v.32** Mary's first statement to the Lord is identical to Martha's, and yet it was said in a different tone. Martha said it almost accusingly, Mary says it as an acknowledgement of the Lord's power. Mary's words were more of an expression of confidence. But neither of them could think past the mere prevention of physical death. They were alike in their ignorance, but Mary had the better spirit. Mary perhaps had learned something of the ways of God by sitting at Jesus feet as a learner. Mary takes the best place; at the feet of Jesus!

**Three times at the Feet of Jesus.** Three times throughout the gospels we find Mary of Bethany at the feet of Jesus. Each time there is a little different emphasis.

1. In Luke 10:39 we have Mary at Jesus' feet **as a learner**. Each time Jesus would go to Jerusalem, He would stop at Bethany and enjoy the company of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. There He would teach them divine things, and Mary had the "better part" of sitting at His feet to learn.
2. In John 11:32 we have Mary at Jesus' feet **as a pray-er**, or supplicant. When overcome with grief, she falls at the feet of her Lord, and without complaining, acknowledges His absolute power over all circumstances, and places herself and her happiness in His capable hands.
3. In John 12:3 we have Mary at Jesus' feet **as a worshiper**. This is pictured by her anointing His feet with precious spikenard. What the Lord values most is our worship. But we will never be a worshiper until we have sat first at Jesus' feet as a learner, then as a pray-er.

Together, these three occasions at the feet of Jesus picture the place of the assembly. We ought to be gathered at the feet of Jesus to hear His word (the reading meeting), to bring our cares and needs before Him (the prayer meeting), and to worship collectively (the breaking of bread).

## Raising of Lazarus (11:33-44)

**Christ's Groaning.** We see the moral sufferings of Christ never so clearly as in John 11, at the grave of Lazarus. Twice over, the moral sufferings of Christ caused Him to groan; once in vv.33-34, and again in vv.37-38 for a different reason. The word "groaning" is interesting in the original. There is no easy English equivalent. The actual word is 'thundered-in'... an inward thundering. It could have been somewhere between a muttering and a snorting noise, but the point is not so much the noise as the internal *suffering* in His soul.

It may be a similar thought to Romans 8, where (1) the creation groans unintelligently under the bondage of corruption, (2) the believer groans with a measure of intelligence, and (3) the Spirit of God groans with perfect intelligence within us, because the Spirit is able to perfectly express to God what we feel but are unable to articulate.

**33** Jesus therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled, **34** and said, Where have ye put him? They say to him, Lord, come and see. **vv.33-34** Here we find Jesus suffering in His spirit *because of the effects of sin in God's creation*. He saw the sorrow that death had brought to Mary and the others, and He groaned in His spirit, and was disturbed. Jesus suffered in His spirit for moral reasons. He suffered as a Holy man walking through a world plagued by sin. The [moral sufferings](#) of Christ were very real, and we can "*suffer with Christ*" (Rom. 8:17) in this aspect. "*Where have ye laid him?*" All man can do is bury the dead. Still their hearts do not rise up to the purpose of our Lord in going to the tomb. Yet we see something beautiful; their hearts surged merely with the sense of Jesus' sympathy. How blessed, to take our sorrows and cares to the Lord. Burdens are lifted at the Throne of Grace, just knowing the Savior cares.

**Three times Jesus was "troubled" or "disturbed".** The Lord Jesus did not use His divinity as a shield to exempt Himself from suffering. We see this in that Jesus was disturbed. The very idea seems strange; that the Eternal God would allow Himself to be disturbed? Yes. The cause was sin. Three times we read of Jesus being "troubled", and all are found in John's gospel:

1. "*Jesus therefore, when he saw her weeping... was troubled*" (John 11:33). Jesus was disturbed as He contemplated the effects of sin in His creation, especially the sorrow that death had brought to Mary and the others.

2. “Now is my soul *troubled*, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour” (John 12:27). Jesus was disturbed as He contemplated the hour of His atoning sufferings on the cross.
3. “Jesus was *troubled* in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say to you, that one of you shall deliver me up” (John 13:21). Jesus was disturbed as He contemplated that one of His own disciples (Judas) would betray Him.

**35 Jesus wept. v.35** The Lord’s sorrow was coupled with deep sympathy for them, and it resulted in His shedding tears. The Lord’s tears were not because of the hardness of His own life, but because of the compassion of His heart towards others. Nor did Jesus weep for Lazarus, but for the sorrow that sin had wrought in the hearts of those He loved. The [sympathetic suffering](#) in the Lord’s soul produce real, human tears. Earlier we read of Mary and the Jews “wailing” or “sobbing” (v.33) ... but this word is simply, “shed tears”. It was not hysteria, but deep feeling in His own Person, *feeling their anguish in Himself as a man*, that produced those tears. We read of Jesus weeping three times in scripture:

1. **Weeping at the Grave of Lazarus** (John 11:35), as He contemplated the awful ravages of sin in the creation, all in perfect sympathy with those who had lost their loved one. This has to do with His [sympathetic sufferings](#).
2. **Weeping over Jerusalem** (Luke 19:41), as He contemplated their folly in rejecting Him, and the sorrows that awaited the city as governmental consequences. This has to do with His [official sufferings](#).
3. **Weeping in Gethsemane** (Heb. 5:7), as He contemplated the horrors of Calvary, particularly the atoning sufferings which weighed upon His holy soul. This has to do with His [anticipative sufferings](#).

It is remarkable that the two shortest verses in the Bible are; “*Jesus wept*” (John 11:35), and “*Rejoice evermore*” (1 Thess. 5:16). The two are complete opposites. But if it weren’t for the sufferings of Christ, we would have no cause to rejoice!

**36 The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! v.36** The cause of those tears was unmistakable... they sprang from the Lord’s heart of love as a perfect man among men. The Jews were totally blind to Jesus’ glory as Divine, but His perfect sympathies as a man were unmistakable. This indissoluble union of perfect manhood with eternal deity in His Person is what shone out in all that He did.

**37** And some of them said, Could not this *man*, who has opened the eyes of the blind *man*, have caused that this *man* also should not have died? **38** Jesus therefore, again deeply

moved in himself, comes to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. **vv.37-38** The Jews were blind to the truth of His deity. He had told them time and again that He was more than a man; that He was the Son of God. Still, they would not believe Him. The Jews express disappointment in Jesus; *“Could not this man, who has opened the eyes of the blind man, have caused that this man also should not have died?”* Think of it... they were disappointed with the Son of God. Hearing this caused the Lord to be *“deeply moved in Himself”* or to groan again (c.p. v.33). This groan expresses Christ’s suffering upon feeling *the callousness sin had produced in the hearts of others*; i.e. the sisters of Bethany, who not only misunderstood Him (like Mary and Martha) but positively *disbelieved* Him. They were blind to who He really was! Their words produced the second groan from the heart of Jesus. The time for words was over, and so Jesus came to the tomb, which was a gloomy cave, sealed with a stone.

**39** Jesus says, *Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead, says to him, Lord, he stinks already, for he is four days there.* **v.39** If there is to be resurrection, there must first be a reckoning with sin... the stone must be taken away to reveal the rotting corpse. Two things are connected with death; separation and corruption. In the first resurrection, both separation and corruption will be defeated! *“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Cor. 15:53). Lazarus’ body had begun to corrupt. Martha recoils from the thought of removing the stone, and we understand why; *“he stinks already, for he is four days there”*. We don’t like to be reminded of the corruption of our own hearts. When it came to the body of our Blessed Lord, we see a marked difference. God allowed the separation aspect of His death, for Christ to be *“cut off out of the land of the living”* (Isa. 53:8), but He would not suffer His *“Holy One to see corruption”* (Psalm 16:10). Martha was seen in Luke 10 as *“cumbered about with serving”*... often occupied with circumstances. We must learn that all the circumstances in the world, even four days of decay, cannot frustrate the purpose of God.

**Involvement of the disciples.** Why didn’t the Lord roll away the stone? If He had the power to raise the dead, certainly He had the power to remove the stone. But He wanted *them* to do it. We need to come to grips with the corruption of the flesh. Why didn’t the Lord remove the grave-clothes? He wanted His disciples to have the privilege of freeing the raised man (see v.44). Removing the stone is part of evangelism, loosing the grave-clothes is part of shepherding.

**40** Jesus says to her, *Did I not say to thee, that if thou shouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?* **v.40** In reply to Martha, Jesus reminds her that faith is all that is needed to see the glory of God displayed. Really, the greatest hindrance to the display of God’s

glory is the intrusion of the human mind - human wisdom - into the things of God. The humbling circumstances of death caused her to abandon belief in the Lord's word. The same principle holds today. For example, it is our lack of faith that the Spirit of God can lead in worship and ministry that gives rise to the clerical system and one-man ministry. If we just believed, we would see the glory of God!

**41** They took therefore the stone away. And Jesus lifted up his eyes on high and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; **42** but I knew that thou always hearest me; but on account of the crowd who stand around I have said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. **vv.41-42** The Lord's prayer to His Father is profound and remarkable. He prays, not because He didn't have power personally, but because He wanted all who looked on to see that He did all according to His Father's will, and that the Father was in perfect fellowship with all that He did. The Father had already heard Him, because the Father "always" heard Him. By praying thus before He raised Lazarus, it was undeniable proof that (1) He was divine, and (2) that He was in perfect communion with the Father. In short, it proved that He was the Son of God.

**The Importance of the Incarnation.** It was the Son's perfect human sympathy that drew out the exercise of the Father's power, as we see in the raising of Lazarus. The greatness of the incarnation is thus evident. The relationship of the Father and Son are disclosed in their undertaking to redeem man. It was only when the Son stooped to take on manhood, that the Father's love for and relationship with the Son was necessarily declared. Certainly, the relationships in the Godhead are eternal, but the declaration of those relationships waited for the time when the Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world!

**43** And having said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. **v.43** The Lord used His voice to raise the dead; an foreshadow of John 5:28-29, when at the resurrection, "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth". Lazarus was not part of first resurrection, because he died again. The same follows for all other past Biblical accounts of resurrection, except the Lord Jesus. [Read more...](#) Three times we read that Jesus cried with a loud voice; (1) when He raised Lazarus, (2) His cry of abandonment, and (3) His cry before yielding up His spirit on the cross. It was only three little words from the lips of the Son of God to raise Lazarus from the dead; the greatest display of power even done, short of the Lord's own resurrection.

**44** And the dead came forth, bound feet and hands with graveclothes, and his face was bound round with a handkerchief. Jesus says to them, Loose him and let him go.

**v.44** Compare the manner of this resurrection with the Lord's own resurrection. Lazarus

comes forth, but he is all tied up with grave-clothes. When the Lord rose, it was an orderly event; e.g. the napkin laid by itself, etc. The Lord commands the disciples to untie Lazarus. This has a typical meaning for us! When a sinner is given life, sometimes the old “grave-clothes” (sinful habits, etc.) do not fall immediately off. Lazarus was bound hands, feet, and face, which might speak of our service, our walk, our communion. After Lazarus was loosed, he was to be let go. We need to be sure to not only “loose” a saved sinner, but “let him go”. There is a danger of bringing new converts under legal bondage... of owning them in some way. We need to set the soul at liberty. Where did Lazarus go when he was let go? To the table (John 12); to communion with Christ!

What can strip the seeming beauty,  
From the idols of the earth?  
Not a sense of right or duty,  
But the sight of peerless worth.

'Tis that look that melted Peter,  
'Tis that face that Stephen saw,  
'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,  
Can alone from idols draw.<sup>4</sup>

## The Sanhedrin Council & the Plot to Kill Jesus (11:45-54)

**45** Many therefore of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he had done, believed on him; **46** but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

**vv.45-46 A Twofold Response.** As we have seen all through the gospel of John, the manifestation of Christ’s glory results in two different responses. Many believed on Jesus as a result of this unparalleled miracle. How wonderful! But some went to the Pharisees and told on Jesus. W. Kelly remarked that it is unlikely that this information was conveyed to the Pharisees with a friendly intention. For some, the manifestation of the Son’s glory caused them to receive Christ. For others, it caused them to reject Christ.

**47** The chief priests, therefore, and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we?



for this man does many signs. **48** If we let him thus alone, all will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. **vv.47-48 The Sanhedrin's Fear.** What the council was afraid of was a sudden shift in power that would bring the Roman boot down on the nation. The Sanhedrin was well aware that Jesus had already done "many signs", and many had believed on Him. If they did nothing, they feared that the Lord's following would certainly grow, and the Romans would come in to squash the movement. But notice, they put their own "place" first, then their "people". Their concern was really selfish.

**49** But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, Ye know nothing **50** nor consider that it is profitable for you that one man die for the people, and not that the whole nation perish. **51** But this he did not say of himself; but, being high priest that year, prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation; **52** and not for the nation only, but that he should also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad. **vv.49-52 The Advice of Caiaphas and Its Prophetic Significance.**

Caiaphas, the high priest, was a cruel and wicked man. He was actually a Sadducee, which meant that he denied the resurrection entirely. These verses show the particular cruelty of the Sadducean heart, beyond even the hatred of the Pharisees. He gives his awful advice; it is better to kill one man in order to preserve the nation from the iron teeth of Rome. Thus, the evil machinations of the political man's mind, in the first century, and in every age, are revealed. But the Holy Spirit reveals that Caiaphas was the unwitting instrument of God at this time. Just as Balaam, a wicked and false prophet of the Old Testament was used against his will to bless the sons of Jacob, so Caiaphas was unwittingly used as the mouthpiece of God to reveal a wonderful fact. Jesus would be killed as a sacrifice for the nation of Israel, that they might be spared from the judgment they justly deserved. On the cross, Jesus suffered partly to bear the sins of the nation of Israel (Isa. 53:5). Christ's substitutional death was "*not for that nation only*", but for all "*the children of God*"... including all believers. The death of Christ is the foundation for the blessing of both (1) the nation of Israel, and (2) the Church! Notice that the death of Christ here not only takes our sins away, but allowed for the children of God to be "*gathered into one*". One of the most fundamental privileges we have as New Testament believers is the conscious knowledge that we are God's children, part of His one family! In the Old Testament, those who had faith were the children of God, but they did not know that fact. In the language of John 11:52, they were "*the children of God that were scattered abroad.*" They had no rallying point. But when the Son of God came into this world, and was lifted up in death, He became the object for faith, and so to "*as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name*" (John 1:12). The "*right to be children*" is the right or privilege to know themselves in a conscious relationship with God as His children. We might

summarize this by saying, the death of Christ gave the children of God the privilege to know themselves in a conscious relationship with God as Father, and with fellow-believers as God's family.

**53** From that day therefore they took counsel that they might kill him. **v.53 Intent to Kill.** Caiaphas' advice was taken, and they began to look for an opportunity to kill the Lord. That opportunity came that spring, at Passover time, when Judas agreed to betray the Lord. Ironically, killing Jesus would not prevent the Romans from coming, but on the contrary, it was the very thing that sealed the Jews' fate in the government of God; *"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city"* (Matt. 22:7).

**54** Jesus therefore walked no longer openly among the Jews, but went away thence into the country near the desert, to a city called Ephraim, and there he sojourned with the disciples. **v.54 Jesus Departs.** The time of the cross was near, but not yet come. So Jesus departs from Jerusalem, a little way off. W. Kelly notes that this place called "Ephraim" can be identified with the modern city of *El-Taiyibeh*, which is about twenty miles from Jerusalem, on the road from Jericho heading northwest. Most likely, the Lord remained in this little city until the Passion Week, when He went down to Jericho, and then to Bethany (John 12:1; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:31-35). "Ephraim" means "fruitful"... perhaps the Father saw there was a little more fruit to be had in the desert country before the cross.

## Public Excitement Regarding Jesus Approaching Passover (11:55-57)

**55** But the passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, that they might purify themselves. **56** They sought therefore Jesus, and said among themselves, standing in the temple, *What do ye think? that he will not come to the feast?* **vv.55-56** With the Feast of the Passover drawing near, there was much public excitement and speculation with regard to Jesus. Would He come to the feast? or would He stay in other parts of Palestine? As faithful Jews, the Lord's earthly parents went every year to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41), according to the law of Moses (Deut. 16:16). Jesus continued in that, and in the gospels we have references to three separate Passover feasts, one for each year of the Lord's public ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). Little did the Jews know, Jesus was the antitype of the Pascal lamb, and He was coming to

Jerusalem not only to keep the Passover feast, but to be offered Himself as “our Passover” (1 Cor. 5:7).

**57** Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment that if any one knew where he was, he should make it known, that they might take him. **v.57** The Jewish leaders were now closing in for the kill. They would harness the public excitement surrounding Jesus to gather information on Jesus’ whereabouts. They were on high alert. But before the Son of man would fall into the hands of wicked Jews, He must be honored by His own disciples, and glorified before the Gentiles (ch.12).

**Dispensational Significance.** As we have already remarked, there is a dispensational overtone to John 8 - 12. Typically speaking, in ch.8 we saw the rejection of Messiah by the nation of Israel. In ch.9 we saw a remnant’s eyes opened by the grace of God. In ch.10 we saw Christ as the gathering center for the assembly. In ch.11 we have the raising up of Israel in type from the dead, which will happen at the close of the present age. Finally, in ch.12 we have a Millennial scene.

## Footnotes

1. Bowley, Mary. *Jesus! How Much Thy Name Unfolds*. Little Flock Hymnbook #6, 1881. (vv.2-3)
2. Darby, J.N. *The Gospel of John*. Notes and Comments, Vol. 6. p.177
3. Darby, J.N. *On the Gospel of John*. p.261
4. Rowan, Ora. *Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?* 1834-1879.