

I. John 11:1-54 – Jesus raises the dead

A. John 11:1-16 – The death of Lazarus

1. John 11:1 – *Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.* Lazarus was the Greek transliteration of the name Eleazar, which means God **helps**.
 - a. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were good **friends** of Jesus. Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.
 - b. This event with Lazarus should not be confused with the story of the **rich** man and Lazarus mentioned in Luke 16:19-31. That is a different story.
2. John 11:2-3 – We know from John 4:46-54 that the Lord had power to heal from a distance, so this decision to not heal immediately but instead wait a few days was part of a deliberate **plan**.
 - a. John 11:2 – *It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.* This story is not told in John’s Gospel until John 12:1-8, but it was recorded in detail in Mark 14:3-9. Jesus said that what she did would be **told** the world over, wherever the gospel was preached.
 - b. John 11:3 – *So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”* Although this was sad news and Jesus was most certainly moved, He did not instantly **leave** to help Lazarus or comfort the fears of the two sisters. Jesus had a greater plan that would benefit Mary and Martha’s faith and bring glory to God.
3. John 11:4 – *But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”* Jesus said Lazarus’ sickness would not terminate with death but would be used to bring **glory** to God the Father and God the Son.
4. John 11:5 – *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.* Because of Jesus love for their family, Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha, totally expected Jesus to drop everything and come immediately. Contrary to their expectations, Jesus deliberately delayed His **arrival**.
5. John 11:6 – *So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.* Lazarus died the same day the messenger delivered the news, but Jesus delayed two more days so that He would arrive on the fourth day after Lazarus’ death. Jesus was in complete **control** of the entire situation. As always, He was intentional in all He did.
6. John 11:7 – *Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”* The religious leaders who sought to murder Jesus lived in Judea. Humanly speaking this was a risky decision, but Jesus went calmly and deliberately. He knew the religious leaders would be at Lazarus’ home, but they could not touch Him until the precise **time** set by the Father.
7. John 11:8 – *The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?”* Not many days prior the Jewish leaders had sought to stone Jesus because He claimed to be God. The disciples were undoubtedly concerned for their own **safety**, as well as His.
8. John 11:9 – *Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.* Daylight is literally when you can see to work and move about. Figuratively, Jesus implied that as the **light** of the world, He provided His disciples with spiritual illumination and understanding.
9. John 11:10 – *“But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”* Unbelievers easily stumble because they do not have Jesus as their light. This was the miserable condition of the religious establishment at the time of Christ. They blindly **stumbled** about in spiritual darkness. John 3:19, Romans 1:21, Ephesians 4:17-19
10. John 11:11 – *This He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.”* Using His omniscience, Jesus knew that Lazarus had already been dead for a while. Jesus was planning on resurrecting him. He used the concept of **sleep** here to refer to the death of Lazarus, a believer.
11. John 11:12 – *The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”* When Jesus said that Lazarus was asleep, the disciples understood Him to mean that Lazarus had physically fallen asleep and was now resting. They were sure that now he would **recover**. But Jesus meant that Lazarus had died.
12. John 11:13 – *Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.* John’s commentary makes it clear that believers in Christ do not die but rather **fall** asleep in God. Matthew 9:24, 27:52; Mark 5:39; Acts 13:36; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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- a. This statement does not mean that after death believers are in **soul** sleep, as some teach. Luke 23:43
 - b. When a believer dies, the soul and spirit remain conscious and are immediately taken into the presence of the Lord to await the resurrection of the **body** at the Rapture. Philippians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:8
 - c. In the New Testament sleep is a common way of describing the death of believers. The souls of the dead are not literally asleep, but their bodies lie in a state of **rest** in anticipation of being awakened in the future resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:16
13. John 11:14 – *So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”* Since the disciples **failed** to understand His spiritual metaphor, Jesus told them bluntly, “Lazarus is dead.”
14. John 11:15 – *“... and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him .”* God was going to use Lazarus’ death to not only give more evidence of Jesus’ messiahship but to also deepen and **solidify** the faith of the disciples. God is pleased to use negative situations to sanctify His children. 2 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Peter 1:7
15. John 11:16 – *Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”* Thomas’ **cynical** comment paralleled his words of doubt after Jesus’ resurrection (Jn. 20:25-28). Thomas, much like us, needed his faith to be boosted, the very goal the Lord had in mind with what was soon to transpire.