

# John 11 vs 1-27

The dead will be raised...

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### *Setting the scene*

We arrive at ch 11... but what is the time frame for all that Jesus has been doing?

- We have had a Passover in ch 2...
- ...again in ch 6
- ...and the whole of chs 11-20 takes place at Passover

....So, by the start of Chapter 11 we will have covered 3 Passovers and therefore 3 years.

Welcome to section 3 of Christ's ministry:

chs 11 - 20: the miracle of Resurrection - through to the CROSS

...or: Life through the death of Jesus!

This section is another of John's 'sandwiches' with chapters at either end of the section matching one another:

ch 11: The miracle of the resurrection – LIFE

ch 12: All about the death of Jesus – DEATH

ch 18-19: All about the death of Jesus – DEATH

ch 20: The miracle of the resurrection – LIFE

The middle of the 'sandwich' = discipleship – implications for his followers

Chs 13-17:

- The washing of the disciples' feet
- The Upper Room conversation

These chapters contain a lesson for us on living life now before Jesus returns.

So the chapters create:

- ch 11 = Life
- ch 12 = Death
- chs 13-17 = Life before Jesus' return
- chs 18-19 = Death
- ch 20 = Life

Notice...

Historically, many writers have suggested that John's gospel be divided into two main parts:

- Part one (chs 1-11) - the Book of Signs
- Part two (chs 12-21) - the Book of Life

There are significant problems with this view, not least that two of the signs come in chs 20-21 with the resurrection of Jesus being the biggest sign of all!!

It seems strange to suggest a structure to John's Gospel which does not include THE SIGN of the Resurrection in the book of signs!

In this study we see how the scene is set for the amazing miracle to come... and begin to see what it will teach us...

We start by reading ch 11 vs 1-16:

ch 11 vs 1-16: *Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*

*<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." <sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

What do these verses tell us about why this miracle happens as it does... and what it means?

- Why does the miracle happen?

v 4: ***"For the glory of God, so that the Son may be glorified."***

v 15: ***"...so that you may believe."***

These verses therefore explain the purpose of the miracle:

- v 4: Glory... and
- v 15: Faith!

If we now see this miracle through Jesus' eyes – what should we be asking ourselves as we read it?

- 1) How does this reveal God's glory?
- 2) How does this reveal Jesus' glory?
- 3) How does this strengthen the disciples' faith?

This takes us back to Jesus first recorded miracle , in ch 2:

ch 2 v 11: ***This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.***

- “***manifested his glory***” ...and they “***believed***”.

Once again we see how carefully John has put his work together in order to demonstrate who Jesus is!

So - why does it happen as it does?

v 6 is the puzzle: ***So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.***

- Jesus delays 2 days...
- ...and it's a 2 day journey to get to Lazarus' home in Bethany, near Jerusalem.
- Lazarus has therefore already been dead 4 days when Jesus arrives... in fact he has already been in his tomb for 4 days:

v 17: *Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.*

v 39: *Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead four days.”*

This means that Jesus DELIBERATELY delayed 2 days so that his friend Lazarus had been dead four days. He did this both for the glory of God and so that his disciples might believe!

...raising a rotting corpse achieves both these ends!!!

BUT... v 11 - what did Jesus mean by: **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep”**?

➤ Jesus sees all of our deaths as just temporary ‘sleep’ before ‘the Second Coming’, when he will return and awake everyone for final judgement.

Where have we seen this before? – Remember ch 5:

Read ch 5 vs 28-29: *“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement.”*

So it’s quite clear...

➤ He will call ALL from death to judgement – he will summon people... as if everybody is just asleep!

Just to make sure we are clear that Lazarus is physically dead... Jesus spells it out:

v 14: ***Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died...”***

In v16 John also gives us some useful background detail:

➤ Lazarus was well known

vs 1-2: *Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.*

➤ Jesus loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus

v 5: *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*

➤ By going back to Jerusalem, the disciples think that this will lead to the death of all of them!

v 16: *So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

Now let’s read vs 17-27:

vs 17-27: *Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”*

So what do we learn about Martha, Mary and Lazarus from these verses?

- Many mourners are there – i.e. there is complete acceptance that Lazarus really has died!

vs 18-19: *Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.*

- Lazarus is clearly a “big fish” as there are lots of mourners! ...So this miracle is going to be widely validated and reported...
- Martha clearly had faith of a sort already as she effectively says: “If only you had been here!”

vs 21-24: *Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”*

Martha believes in the final Resurrection on the last day (the Second Coming)! But, as yet, she hasn’t quite grasped the full extent of Jesus’ power!

Jesus now wants to move her on in her understanding...

So... how do vs 25-26 help her?

vs 25-26: *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

There are at least four parts to it that we should notice:

- 1) Jesus is GOD! He uses God’s name for himself! “**I am**”
- 2) He explains that, as God, HE is the Resurrection and the Life:

v 25: *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live...”*

- 3) He unpacks this further by stating that he will give life to his people both now and when he returns.

When Jesus returns:

- v 25: “**Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live...**”

This refers to the Resurrection at the end of time (when Jesus returns). This is what Martha has referred to in v24:

v 24: *Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”*

In v 25 Jesus connects this resurrection at the end of time with himself!!

At the end of time the Christian will be raised, physically, by Jesus... to live with him forever.

Now:

v 26: “...and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

I have life – eternal life – that no-one can take away from me – EVER.

So... though my body may die and rot as it waits for the physical resurrection, my SOUL will live with Jesus in paradise.

- 4) Jesus wants Mary and Martha to have more than just a conceptual belief in the resurrection. He wants them to have a personal, confident trust in him.

### ***“Do you believe this?”***

Martha calls Jesus “**LORD.... THE CHRIST....THE SON OF GOD**”

v 27: *She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”*

- Has she understood all that Jesus wants her to at this point?

Maybe...

But... as we’re going to see, she has yet to believe:

- That Jesus is ‘the Resurrection’ now
- That he is ‘the Life’ now
- ...and that when someone trusts Jesus they are given spiritual life from God now ...in anticipation of spiritual and physical life with him when he returns!!

### ***Summing up...***

The purpose of ch11 is to explain that God will be glorified through the death and resurrection of Jesus... and that we come to believe...

Martha believed... but Jesus was much bigger than she realised.

- How big is our view of Jesus?

What we are to believe through Lazarus' coming back to life from the dead - his resurrection - is spelled out in vs 24-26:

Read vs 24-26: *Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."* <sup>25</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

### ***A thought to mull over...***

What would our lives be like if we did believe what Jesus says about himself here?

### ***Next time...***

Jesus orders the opening of a dead man's grave, and causes an almighty stink...

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