

The Word Resurrects

John 11:17-27, 38-44
SS Lesson for 07/24/2022

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 15:20-26

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: John 11:25-26

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

"If Only You Had Been Here" (11:17-37)

The Raising of Lazarus (11:38-44)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The phrase the *point of no return* originated in the early days of powered flight. Technically, it is that place on a flight path where the amount of fuel remaining makes it impossible to return to the airfield of takeoff. When we use that phrase in other contexts, we usually mean that we've reached a point where it is impractical or even impossible to turn back and start over. Our Bible story today is about a person named Lazarus who seemingly had reached the ultimate point of no return: death. Death is the last stop for all our hopes and dreams in this world, the final and unavoidable end to every plan and purpose. As we've all been told, the only two things that are certain in this life are death and taxes. While we theoretically can avoid taxes, there's simply no coming back from the grave. Or is there? This week's lesson finds Jesus back in Judea after having withdrawn to minister in Perea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River (John 10:40). Often noted is the fact that there are seven famous "I am the [something]" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. These are found in John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1, 5. Today's lesson concerns the fifth of those seven, uttered by Jesus' in the third year of his ministry as a preface to the raising of Lazarus.

Key Verse: John 11:25-26

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?"

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

This climactic miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was Jesus' public evidence of the truth of His great claim, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Death is the great horror which sin has produced (Rom. 5:12; James 1:15). Physical death is the divine object lesson of what sin does in the spiritual realm. As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God and the loss of life which is in God (John 1:4). Jesus has come so that people may live full lives (10:10). Rejecting Jesus means that one will not see life (3:36) and that his final destiny is "the second death," the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15).

11:1-2. This **Lazarus** is mentioned in the New Testament only in this chapter and in chapter 12. **Bethany** (cf. 11:18) is on the east side of the Mount of Olives. Another Bethany is in Perea (cf. 1:28). Luke added some information on the two sisters **Mary** and **Martha** (Luke 10:38-42). **This Mary... was the same one who later** (see John 12:1-10) **poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair.** However, John may be assuming that the original readers of his Gospel already had some knowledge of Mary (cf. Mark 14:3-9).

11:3. **The sisters** assumed, because of the Lord's ability and His **love** for Lazarus, that He would immediately respond to their **word** about Lazarus' illness and come.

11:4. **Jesus** did not go immediately (see v. 6). But His delay was not from lack of love (cf. v. 5), or from fear of the Jews. He waited till the right moment in the Father's plan. Lazarus' **sickness** would **not end in death**, that is, in permanent death. Instead Jesus would **be glorified** in this incident (cf. 9:3). This statement is ironic. Jesus' power and obedience to the Father were displayed, but this event led to *His* death (cf. 11:50-53), which was His true **glory** (17:1).

11:5-6. In spite of Jesus' love for all three (**Martha and her sister and Lazarus**), **He** waited **two more days**. Apparently (vv. 11, 39) Lazarus was already dead when Jesus heard about him. Jesus' movements were under God's direction (cf. 7:8).

11:7-10. **His disciples** knew that His going to **Judea**, would be dangerous (10:31). So they tried to prevent Him from going. **Jesus** spoke in a veiled way to illustrate that it would not be too dangerous to go to Bethany. In one sense He was speaking of walking (living) in physical **light** or darkness. In the spiritual realm when one lives by the will of God he is safe. Living in the realm of evil is dangerous. As long as He followed God's plan, no harm would come till the appointed time. Applied to people then, they should have responded to Jesus while He was in the world as its Light (cf. 1:4-7; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5). Soon He would be gone and so would this unique opportunity.

11:11-12. Jesus then said, **Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.** The word "friend" has special significance in Scripture (cf. 15:13-14; James 2:23). This "sleep" is the sleep of death. Since the coming of

Christ the death of a believer is regularly called a sleep (cf. Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). Dead Christians are asleep not in the sense of an unconscious “soul sleep,” but in the sense that their bodies appear to be sleeping. The **disciples** wrongly assumed that Jesus meant Lazarus had not died, but was sleeping physically (cf. John 11:13) and was on his way to recovery: **If he sleeps, he will get better.**

11:13-15. As was often the case in the Gospels, **Jesus** was **speaking** about one thing **but** the **disciples** were thinking about another. The words **Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there** seem shocking at first. But if Lazarus had not died, the disciples (and readers of all ages) would not have had this unique opportunity to have their faith quickened. Lazarus’ death was **so that you may believe.**

11:16. Didymus means “twin.” **Thomas** is often called “doubting Thomas” because of the incident recorded in 20:24-25. But here he took the leadership and showed his commitment to Christ, even to death. **That we may die with Him** is ironic. On one level it reveals Thomas’ ignorance of the uniqueness of Christ’s atoning death. On another level it is prophetic of many disciples’ destinies (12:25).

11:17. Apparently **Lazarus had** died soon after the messengers left. **Jesus** was then a day’s journey away. Since Palestine is warm and decomposition sets in quickly, a person was usually buried the same day he died (cf. v. 39).

11:18-19. The fact that **Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem** points up two things. It explains why **many Jews** from Jerusalem were at the scene of this great miracle (vv. 45-46). It also prepares the reader for the coming climax which was to take place in the great city. When a person died, the Jews mourned for a prolonged period of time. During this period it was considered a pious duty **to comfort** the bereaved.

11:20-22. Martha, the activist, **went... to meet** Jesus while **Mary,** the contemplative sister, waited. (Cf. Luke 10:39-42 for a similar portrayal of their personalities.) Martha’s greeting is a confession of faith. She really believed that **Jesus** could have healed her brother **if He had been** there. No criticism of Jesus seems to be implied since she knew her **brother** was dead before the messengers got to Jesus. Her words **But I know... God will give You whatever You ask** might imply by themselves that she was confident Lazarus would be resuscitated. But her actions in protest at the tomb (John 11:39) and her words to Jesus (v. 24) contradict that interpretation. Her words may be taken as a general statement of the Father’s blessing on Jesus.

11:23-24. Your brother will rise again. Since the word “again” is not in the Greek it is better to omit it in the translation. This promise sets the stage for Jesus’ conversation with **Martha.** She had no thought of an immediate resuscitation but she did believe **in the final resurrection at the last day.**

11:25-26. I am the Resurrection and the Life. This is the fifth of Jesus’ great “I am” revelations. The Resurrection and the Life of the new Age is present right now because Jesus is the Lord of life (1:4). Jesus’ words about life and death are seemingly paradoxical. A believer’s death issues in new life. In fact, the life of a believer is of such a quality that he **will never die** spiritually. He has eternal life (3:16; 5:24; 10:28), and the end of physical life is only a sleep for his body until the resurrection into life. At death the spiritual part of a believer, his soul, goes to be with the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6, 8; Phil. 1:23).

11:27. Martha gave a great confession of faith in Christ. She agreed with Jesus’ exposition about eternal life for those who **believe** in Him. Then she confessed three things about Jesus. He is (a) **the Christ** (“Messiah”), (b) **the Son of God**—which is probably a title of the Messiah (cf. 1:49; Ps. 2:7)—and (c) the One **who was to come into the world** (lit., “the Coming One”; cf. John 12:13). She believed that Jesus is the Messiah who came to do God’s will, but as yet she had no hint of the coming miracle regarding her brother.

11:28-30. Martha then told **Mary** that Jesus **the Teacher** was **asking for** her. He evidently wanted to have a private conversation with Mary. His purpose was probably to comfort and instruct her. “The Teacher” is a notable title for it was unusual for a Jewish Rabbi to instruct a woman (cf. 4:1-42).

11:31-32. Mary’s sudden departure to see Jesus caused the crowd of Jewish comforters to follow **her.** So a private session with Jesus became impossible. Reaching **Jesus,** **Mary fell at His feet.** This is significant, for on a previous occasion she had sat at Jesus’ feet listening to His teaching (Luke 10:39). Her greeting to Jesus was the same as her sister’s (John 11:21). She felt the tragedy would have been averted **if He had been** present. Her faith was sincere but limited.

11:33-34. In great contrast with the Greek gods’ apathy or lack of emotion, Jesus’ emotional life attests the reality of His union with people. **Deeply moved** may either be translated “groaned” or more likely

“angered.” The Greek word *enebrimēsato* (from *embrimaomai*) seems to connote anger or sternness. (This Gr. verb is used only five times in the NT, each time of the Lord’s words or feelings: Matt. 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33, 38.) Why was **Jesus** angry? Some have argued that He was angry because of the people’s unbelief or hypocritical wailing. But this seems foreign to the context. A better explanation is that Jesus was angry at the tyranny of Satan who had brought sorrow and death to people through sin (cf. 8:44; Heb. 2:14-15). Also Jesus was **troubled** (*etaraxen*, lit., “stirred” or “agitated,” like the pool water in John 5:7; cf. 12:27; 13:21; 14:1, 27). This disturbance was because of His conflict with sin, death, and Satan.

11:35-37. Jesus’ weeping differed from that of the people. His quiet shedding of tears (*edakrysen*) differed from their loud wailing (*klaiontas*, v. 33). His weeping was over the tragic consequences of sin. The crowd interpreted His tears as an expression of love, or frustration at not being there to heal Lazarus.

11:38-39. Disturbed emotionally (cf. v. 33), He **came to the tomb**. Tombs were often cut into limestone making a **cave** in the side of a wall of rock. A **stone** was placed over **the entrance**. **Jesus** commanded that **the stone** door be taken **away**. To do so was to risk defilement. But obedience was necessary if Jesus’ purpose was to be realized. The scene was highly dramatic. The crowd watched and listened. Mary was weeping and **Martha** objected because after **four days** putrefaction had set in.

11:40. **Jesus** reminded Martha of His earlier promise (vv. 25-26; cf. v. 4). **If** she **believed** His word that He is the Resurrection and the Life and trusted Him, **God** would be glorified. But unless the sisters had trusted Jesus, permission would not have been given to open the tomb.

11:41-42. With **the stone** taken **away**, the tension mounted. What would **Jesus** do? He simply thanked His **Father** for granting His request. He knew He was doing the Father’s will in manifesting His love and power. His prayer of thanksgiving was public, not so that He would be honored as a Wonder-Worker but so He would be seen as the Father’s obedient Son. The granting of His request by the Father would give clear evidence to the people that He had been **sent** by the Father and would cause the people to **believe** (cf. Elijah’s prayer; 1 Kings 18:37).

11:43-44. On other occasions **Jesus** had said that men would hear His voice and come out of their graves (5:28) and that His sheep hear His voice (10:16, 27). After His brief prayer He **called** (*ekraugasen*, lit., “shouted loudly”) **in a loud voice**. This verb is used only nine times in the New Testament, eight of them in the Gospels (Matt. 12:19; Luke 4:41; John 11:43; 12:13; 18:40; 19:6, 12, 15; Acts 22:23). Jesus shouted only three words: **Lazarus come out!** Augustine once remarked that if Jesus had not said Lazarus’ name all would have come out from the graves. Immediately, **the dead man came out**. Since he was **wrapped in strips of linen**, a special work of God’s power must have brought him out. Jesus’ directive to the people, **Take off the grave clothes**, enabled Lazarus to move on his own and at the same time gave evidence that he was alive and not a ghost. This event is a marvelous picture of God’s Son bringing life to people. He will do this physically at the Rapture for church saints (1 Thes. 4:16), and at His return for Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:2) and Tribulation saints (Rev. 20:4, 6). Also He now speaks and calls spiritually dead people to spiritual life. Many who are dead in sins and trespasses believe and come to life by the power of God (Eph. 2:1-10).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Problem (John 11:17-19)

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.

19 And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

The finality of death (17)

From an earthly perspective, when there is physical death the mind knows nothing (Eccl 9:5)

5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.

All living humans know they will die (Eccl 9:5)

5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.

People are destined to die (Heb 9:27)

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Death is appointed for all the living (Job 30:23)

23 I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.

The hopelessness of death (18)

Unbelievers have no hope after death (1 Thess 4:13)

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

Unbelievers have no refuge after death (Prov 14:32)

32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

If hope is limited to physical life only, there is only pity left (1 Cor 15:19)

19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

All people separated from Jesus are without hope after death (Eph 2:12)

12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

The sorrow in death (19)

Sorrow because of love for the one who has died (John 11:32-36)

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

Sorrow because of the death of a family member (Luke 7:11-15)

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out — the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." 14 Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Sorrow because of the death of a child (Luke 8:51-53)

51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. 52 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." 53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

The Perception (John 11:20-24)

20 Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.
21 Now 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."
23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."
24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

The faith (20-21)

Everything is possible for those who believe through faith (Mark 9:21-24)

21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."
23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Faith of a touch (Matt 9:20-22)

20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." 22 Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

Faith despite obstacles (Matt 15:22-28)

22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." 23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." 25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." 27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Faith that may be as small as a mustard seed (Luke 17:5-6)

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

The hope (22-24)

Hope that does not disappoint (Rom 5:5)

5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Hope that is waited for patiently (Rom 8:22-25)

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Hope through the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Hope of deliverance (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

The Proclamation (John 11:25-27)

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."

The great I AM (25)

The I AM the resurrection because Jesus will raise up the believers at the last day (John 6:39-40)

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

The I AM the resurrection because Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:21-23)

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

The I AM the resurrection because Jesus provides the living hope of resurrection (1 Peter 1:3)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The I AM the resurrection because Jesus saves through His resurrection (1 Peter 3:18-21)

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The I AM the life because in Jesus is life (John 1:4)

4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The I AM the life because Jesus has life in Himself (John 5:26)

26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

The I AM the life because Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35)

35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

The I AM the life because Jesus is the life (John 14:6)

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The blessings of belief (26)

Living in Jesus

The blessing of living in Jesus by being connected to the vine of Jesus (John 15:5)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

The blessing of living in Jesus by being baptized into Jesus (Gal 3:26-29)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The blessing of living in Jesus by being united with Jesus (Phil 2:1-5)

2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Never taste death

Never taste death because through belief in Jesus eternal life is gained (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Never taste death because of not being condemned through belief in Jesus (John 5:24)

24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Never taste death because no one can snatch believers out of Jesus' hand (John 10:28-30)

28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Never taste death through obedient to Jesus' words (John 8:51)

51 I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

The three-fold confession about Jesus (27)

Jesus is the Christ

Jesus is the Christ because God reveals it to believers (Matt 16:16)

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus is the Christ because Jesus admitted it (Matt 26:63-64)

63 But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus is the Christ because the Bible teaches it (John 20:30-31)

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus is the Son of God

Son of God because of the miracles He performed (Matt 14:28-33)

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Son of God because of His activities on the cross (Matt 27:54)

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Son of God because Jesus lives within believers (Gal 2:20)

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Jesus has come into the world

Came in the world to provide understanding and knowledge of God (1 John 5:20)

20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Came in the world to destroy the work of Satan (1 John 3:8)

8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Came in the world as the light of the world (John 3:19)

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Came in the world as a Prophet to the world (John 6:14)

14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

The Death (John 11:38-39)

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."

Time of grief (38)

Though God allows grief, He will show compassion (Lam 3:32-33)

32 Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. 33 For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

Even in grief, God's presence brings eternal joy (John 16:22)

22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

God promises that His children who mourn will be comforted (Matt 5:4)

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Jesus' view of death (39)

The death of saints are precious in God's sight (Ps 116:15)

15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

The death of saints brings them to the bosom of God and His angels (Luke 16:22-27)

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' 25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

The death and lives of saints are in God's hands (Ps 31:15)

15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.

The Faith (John 11:40-42)

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

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."

Faith through trusting in God (40)

Trust in God because He is our shelter (Ps 32:7)

7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.
Selah

Trust in God because there should be no fear of death (Ps 23:4)

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Trust in God because He is our refuge (Ps 46:1)

46 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Faith through prayer (41)

Prayer because there is confidence in approaching God's throne (Heb 4:16)

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Prayer because Jesus is interceding for us (Rom 8:34)

34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Prayer because the prayer offered in faith is effective (James 5:15-16)

15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Faith in God's attentiveness (42)

God hears and is attentive to the prayers of the righteous (Ps 34:15-17)

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; 16 the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

God is attentive to the needs of obedient servants (Isa 58:6-11)

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

God is attentive to the righteous (1 Peter 3:12)

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

The Resurrection (John 11:43-44)

43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

God's power over death (43)

God's power over death for God's children (Luke 20:35-36)

35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

God's power over death in heaven (Rev 21:4)

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

God's power over death because He is the only one who can destroy the soul (Matt 10:28)

28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Freedom and restoration (44)

God restores into salvation (Ps 80:3)

3 Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

God renews and restores one's spirit into a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

God renews and restores the inner being (2 Cor 4:16)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

“If Only You Had Been Here” (11:17-37)

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. 18 (Now Bethany was less than two miles distance from Jerusalem, 19 so many of the Jewish people who lived in Jerusalem had come to Martha and Mary to console them over the loss of their brother.) 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 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 from God, God will grant you.” 23 Jesus replied, “Your brother will come back to life again.” 24 Martha said, “I know that he will come back to life again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, 26 and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She replied, “Yes, Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world.” 28 And when she had said this, Martha went and called her sister Mary, saying privately, “The Teacher is here and is asking for you.” 29 So when Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still in the place where Martha had come out to meet him.) 31 Then the Jewish people from Jerusalem who were with Mary in the house consoling her saw her get up quickly and go out. They followed her, because they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, **“Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.”** 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jewish people who had come with her weeping, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed. 34 He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They replied, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept. 36 Thus the Jewish people who had come to mourn said, “Look how much he loved²⁰⁶ him!” 37 But some of them said, “This is the man who caused the blind man to see! **Couldn’t he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?**” (emphasis mine)

When Jesus arrives outside Bethany, I believe that both Martha (and later) Mary greet Him with “their hands on their hips,” so to speak. I am assuming this body language from the situation as I understand it, and from what their words to Jesus seem to imply. The essence of this is: “Lord, You’ve got a lot of explaining to do.” When Lazarus became gravely ill, these two sisters quickly dispatched a messenger to find Jesus, to give Him the news that Lazarus was sick, and to convey the urgent need for Him to come quickly. They expected Jesus to drop everything He was doing and to come to them immediately at Bethany. In their minds, as long as Lazarus was still alive, there was still hope. If Jesus could just get to Bethany quickly, while Lazarus was still alive, then they were sure that He could heal their brother, and thus prevent him from dying. If Jesus failed to get there before Lazarus died, there was nothing more He could do.

From the word they received back from Jesus (by way of the messenger they sent to Him), they expect that Lazarus will not die, but will recover. When Jesus fails to come quickly and Lazarus dies, these two women are at a loss to understand what has gone wrong. Is Jesus wrong in the message He sends ahead to them? Does Jesus delay because He does not care about them? Could Jesus not simply have healed Lazarus from a distance, as He has done before (see [John 4:46-50](#))? What has gone wrong? They still love Jesus, but they do not understand what has happened. In their minds, Jesus has some explaining to do! And so three times in our text we read, **“If only you (or “he”) had been here ...”** The one thing all seem to agree upon is that if Jesus had gotten there sooner, Lazarus would not have died. Although Jesus loved Lazarus and his two sisters, His deliberate delay has cost His dear friend his life and has caused these two women, whom He also loved, great sorrow.

Family and friends gather to mourn the death of Lazarus. Many of these mourners come from Jerusalem. Martha seems to have gotten word about Jesus’ arrival, while Mary does not seem to realize He has arrived until later (verse 28). Martha makes her way out to where Jesus is waiting, while her sister Mary remains inside the

house, grieving with many of the mourners who are with her. When Martha finds Jesus, the first thing she says to Him is, “**Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.**” Some take her next words to be an expression of her faith in our Lord’s ability to raise Lazarus from the dead: “**But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant ...**” (verse 22). I think that she does convey her faith in Jesus by these words, but not to the degree we might wish. I don’t think she is suggesting that if He were but to ask the Father, God would raise Lazarus from the dead, then and there. When Jesus speaks to Martha about Lazarus’ future resurrection, she takes this as a reference to his resurrection in the last days, and not at that moment in time. She assures Jesus that she believes Lazarus will rise someday. Further, when Jesus instructs those standing by the tomb to roll away the stone, it is Martha who objects, calling attention to how long Lazarus has been in the tomb already.

What, then, does Martha mean when she says that she believes “that whatever Jesus asks of the Father, the Father will grant Him”? First, let me assure you that I do not wish in any way to demean Martha, or to underestimate her faith. Even though our Lord has caused her disappointment, confusion and grief, she still believes in Him. She does not understand what He is doing, but still she trusts in Him. I also think Martha’s faith is greater than that of the disciples at this point in time. She believes in the (future) resurrection of the dead. She has a good grasp of our Lord’s intimate relationship with the Father, and of the fact that Jesus does not act independently of the Father. Thus, she does not speak of her assurance concerning whatever Jesus attempts to do, but rather of her assurance that God the Father will answer the prayers of His Son. What I believe Martha means by her words is that even though our Lord’s recent words and deeds have puzzled her greatly, she has not ceased to trust in Him, and in His intimate relationship with God the Father. In effect, she seems to be saying, “If You had not delayed in coming, Lazarus would not have died. I don’t understand why You would assure me that Lazarus would not die when, in fact, he did die. But in spite of what I don’t understand, I still believe that You are the Messiah, and that because of Your relationship with the Father, God will grant whatever You ask of Him.”

Jesus assures Martha that Lazarus will come back to life, but Martha sees this as taking place “in the sweet bye and bye.” She knows that Lazarus will live again in the resurrection. Isn’t Martha just like many of us? We believe in God’s power, hypothetically, and that His promises will come about—in the distant future. But we often doubt His power in the present moment. We criticize the evolutionists for believing that anything is possible, if only enough time passes, and yet we do much the same. We believe in God’s power then, but not in His power now. We believe God can do great things, given a long enough time to do it, but we are not as convinced about His ability to act now, if it is His will.²⁰⁷

I want to tell you a story about a fellow-elder, whose name I will not mention (to save him embarrassment). A number of years ago, a man in our church was in the process of becoming an elder. His name was Dan Tarbox. Dan was also attending seminary. In the midst of this, Dan discovered that he had a rare and deadly form of lung cancer. As you might expect, we all prayed very diligently for Dan. And for some time, Dan enjoyed a remission. But eventually his cancer came back, and his condition became more and more grave. It was interesting to see how our prayers began to “downgrade” as Dan’s condition declined. Some of us began to pray that Dan would “go quickly and without pain.” But one of my fellow-elders refused to do this. He continued to pray for Dan’s complete healing, just as he had done earlier, in spite of Dan’s declining condition. He explained why he did so to the rest of us. He said that He believed God was able to fully and completely heal Dan if He chose to do so. He admitted that he did not have any sense of guidance or leading that this was God’s will. But he refused to downgrade his prayers, simply because things looked humanly impossible. He refused to downgrade his prayers, simply because his request appeared to be an impossible one. I learned a very important lesson from my friend and fellow-elder that day, a lesson I pray that I shall never forget.

Jesus now takes Martha to the bedrock of her faith. He declares to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (verses 25-26). She confesses that she does believe: “I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world” (verse 27). I think I understand why she speaks as she does. First of all, it seems that she confesses to have believed in Jesus as the Messiah at some earlier point in time. I also believe her confession emphasizes that while she does not at all understand what has just happened, she does still trust in Jesus as the Messiah. While these recent events in her life do not make any sense, she still trusts in Jesus as her Messiah. He is the One who has come into the world from above, whose prayers the Father will hear and answer.

Having spoken these words affirming her faith in Jesus, Martha returns home to summon her sister Mary. When Mary learns that Jesus has arrived and is asking for her, she immediately gets up and rushes out to Him (verse 29). This hardly looks like sulking to me. It seems as though Mary remains in the house because she does not

know Jesus has arrived. When she learns of His arrival, she is quick to go out to Him. Following along are the mourners who have come from Jerusalem. They do not know she is going out to meet Jesus. They think she is going out to the tomb, to mourn, and so they accompany her.

When Mary arrives at the place outside Bethany where Jesus is, she falls at His feet and repeats the words she and Martha must have repeated among themselves many times, **“Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died”** (verse 32). From what we read in verse 33, we realize that Mary’s words to Jesus are interspersed with deep sobbing. The depth of Mary’s heartache cannot be represented well in print, but her words to Jesus must have been spoken something like this: “Lord...(sob), if You had been here...(sob...), my brother...would not have...(long sob)...died...” “Where there’s life, there’s hope,” and thus we can see that with the death of Lazarus, all of Mary’s hope for Lazarus’ healing is gone. It all seems so senseless to Mary, because she knows Lazarus’ death could have been prevented. Why did He wait so long to come?

Jesus knows from the very beginning that the death of Lazarus will be reversed. We might therefore conclude that all of this grieving is, in one sense, needless. But our Lord does not think so. Seeing Mary’s tears, and those of the Jews who have come to mourn with her, Jesus is deeply touched. In verse 33, John employs two terms to describe our Lord’s deep emotional response to the grief of those around Him. The NET Bible renders the first term **“intensely moved.”** This term has the connotation of sternness as in a stern warning (Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43) or scolding (Mark 14:5), and even anger. Thus, the Holman Christian Standard Version and the New Living Translation actually employ the terms "angry" (CSB) and "anger" (NLT). We sometimes emphasize our Lord’s sorrow over the death of Lazarus, and overlook our Lord’s anger over the ugly consequence of sin -- namely death.

The second term, rendered **“greatly distressed”** by the NET Bible, is used to describe Herod, who is greatly troubled at hearing of the birth of Israel’s King from the magi (Matthew 2:3). When the disciples were on their way across the Sea of Galilee and saw Jesus passing by, walking on the water, they were **“troubled”** (Matthew 14:26). Later, the disciples were troubled when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection (Luke 24:38). In John, the term is used by our Lord to describe His troubled soul, as He contemplates the cross (John 12:27), and in chapter 13 when Jesus considers the fact that one of His disciples, seated at the table with Him, will betray Him (John 13:21).

All of this is to let us know that our Lord is greatly affected by the sorrow of those about Him. He does not dab away at a tear or two; He visibly trembles as He weeps. This is observed by those there at the burial place of Lazarus, along with Mary, and they say to each other, **“Look how much he loved him”** (verse 26). This is now the third time that mention has been made of our Lord’s love for Lazarus. The first is when Martha and Mary remind Jesus of His love for Lazarus, when they send word to Him of the illness of their brother (verse 3). The second is in verse 5, when John makes it clear with the strongest term for love (agaph) that Jesus deeply loved Lazarus, and his two sisters (verse 5). Now, those standing by Mary can see our Lord’s love for Lazarus themselves (verse 36).

Also for the third time, we find an expression of bewilderment that Lazarus should have died at all: **“This is the man who caused the blind man to see! Couldn’t he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?”** (verse 37). This is virtually the same thought expressed by Martha (verse 21) and Mary (verse 32). Anyone who knows anything about Jesus knows that He could have healed Lazarus. What no one seems to believe, at the moment, is that Jesus can and will raise Lazarus from the dead, that very hour! This raising and the various reactions to it will be the subject of our next lesson.

The Raising of Lazarus (11:38-44)

38 Jesus, intensely moved again, came to the tomb. (Now it was a cave, and a stone was placed across it.) 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, replied, “Lord, by this time the body will have a bad smell, because he has been buried four days.” 40 Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you that you have listened to me. 42 I knew that you always listen to me, but I said this for the sake of the crowd standing around here, that they may believe that you sent me.” 43 When he had said this, he shouted in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The one who had died came out, his feet and hands tied up with strips of cloth, and a cloth wrapped around his face. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.”

Twice already, John has written of our Lord’s deep emotional response to the death of Lazarus, and more specifically, in response to the sorrow of Mary and those gathered there with her at the tomb of Lazarus. A sob erupts from Jesus, trembling as He continues to sob inwardly (verse 33). As He draws near the tomb where the body of His friend lies, Jesus bursts out in tears (verse 35). Now, in verse 38, John tells us that Jesus is

“intensely moved again.” Jesus is truly touched with compassion as He enters into the grief of those gathered there to mourn the death of Lazarus.

Lazarus is buried in a cave, with a stone covering the opening. This sounds strikingly similar to the burial sight of our Lord (e.g. [Matthew 27:60](#)). The raising of Lazarus almost looks like a dress rehearsal for the resurrection of our Lord in the near future. Jesus orders the stone to be rolled away. We can't be sure who Jesus orders to move the stone, or who actually does move it. It could be the disciples, of course, but it may just as well be others, such as some of those who have come to mourn with Mary. I am inclined to think that Jesus deliberately employs those other than His disciples to remove the stone. Doing this would seem to require some measure of faith on their part. Today, we must go through a very strict legal process to gain access to a body once it has been buried. In Judaism, contact with a dead body is defiling. Besides that, it is disgusting, especially after four days. I suspect those who removed the stone received a good whiff of the smell of decaying flesh. These witnesses will not easily be persuaded by a “swoon theory” or any attempt to explain away the literal death (and raising) of Lazarus. Such personal involvement in this process makes these participants even better witnesses to the miracle which is about to occur.

It is Martha, however, who objects to our Lord's instruction to remove the stone. She protests that too much time has passed. The body will certainly smell very bad, she explains. But beyond this, it just seems to reopen a very painful wound. It seems quite obvious that Martha is not expecting Jesus to perform any miracle here, and certainly not the raising of one who has been dead for several days. Earlier, Jesus assures her that if she believes, she will see the glory of God (verse 40). By calling this to her attention once again, Jesus is seeking to stretch her faith. Martha relents, and the stone is removed.

Our Lord then lifts His eyes to heaven and begins to pray to His heavenly Father. This is one of the few times in the Gospels that a public prayer of our Lord is recorded. Earlier He warned about the misuse of public prayers, which are only for show ([Matthew 6:5](#)). But Jesus consistently claims that He does His Father's work, and that He works with God (see [John 5:17, 19-23, 30, 37, 43](#)). Martha has just testified that she believes whatever Jesus asks of the Father, He will give to Him (11:22). Our Lord's prayer is intended to demonstrate that the miraculous raising of Lazarus is something that the Father does through the Son. It is a public testimony to the fact that the Father hears the Son, demonstrating His power and glory through Him. Jesus does not pray this prayer for His own benefit, but for the benefit of the crowd looking on (11:41-42). His prayer does not specifically petition the Father to raise Lazarus. Jesus does thank His Father because He hears His prayers. Our Lord's petition here is that men might believe that He has been sent from the Father, and we know that this prayer was answered (see verse 45).

Having prayed in this manner, Jesus now cries out in a loud voice, **“Lazarus, come out!”** (verse 43). It has quite often been observed that if Jesus had not specified **“Lazarus,”** every dead body in the region would have arisen from the dead. In shouting with a loud voice, Jesus reveals His confidence that the Father will hear Him, and that Lazarus will rise from the dead. He does not mumble these words under His breath, so that no one will hear what He is saying. No one comes away from this burial place wondering if there is a connection between that shout and Lazarus' coming forth. It is a clear case of cause and effect. Jesus is the cause of Lazarus' rising from the dead.

Lazarus emerges, still wrapped up in his burial attire. Some think his coming forth, bound with these restrictive wrappings, is a miracle in itself. Jesus instructs those standing nearby to release Lazarus from his bindings, and so they do. The witnesses to this resurrection are very much involved in the outworking of the miracle. They see and hear Jesus calling Lazarus out of his tomb. They help roll the stone away from the tomb, and they remove the cloth that has been wrapped around the body of Lazarus. I am inclined to wonder how some of the more scrupulous Jews dealt with this. The Old Testament clearly forbids touching a dead body. When they touch the body of Lazarus, who used to be dead, are they still defiling themselves? Here is a legal question the Jews have not dealt with before.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/dealing-death-john-111-37>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The raising to life of a man who had been dead four days was among the greatest of Jesus' miracles. Jesus was working out God's plan to bring faith to his followers, but this faith did not come without personal pain. For the raising of Lazarus to happen, he first had to die, resulting in grief to loved ones. As marvelous as the raising of Lazarus was, we should remember that it was different from the resurrection of Jesus. On that day outside Bethany, Jesus broke the power of death over Lazarus temporarily since it's fair to assume that he rose only to die again. Jesus' own resurrection, however, broke the power of death permanently. Traditions claim that Lazarus eventually became a bishop on Cyprus and that his remains are still in the Church of St. Lazarus in the city of Larnaca on that island. This is referred to as the "second tomb" of Lazarus, the final resting place for his body after his second death. Wherever his final resting place, the account of his raising in John 11 points to the hope of his permanent resurrection on the final day; it points to ours as well. Martha held on to this hope even after the untimely death of her brother (John 11:24); we must hold on to it when losing a loved one or facing death ourselves. The key to having such faith is the resurrection of Jesus himself. His resurrection is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). He was the first to be raised permanently. As such, Jesus opens the way to life eternal for all who believe in him. He is the "resurrection and the life," and those who place their faith in him, even though they die, will live again (John 11:25, 26).

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Questions - Lazarus, a close friend of Jesus, became seriously ill. His sisters, with whom he lived, sent a message Jesus, but Jesus, away on a trip, delayed coming. When the Savior arrived, Lazarus was dead. But Jesus desired to use this incident to deploy God's glory for those who believe. By the time Jesus approached the Lazarus house, a big crowd of mourners had surrounded the family. Mary, one of the sisters, sat at home, consumed with grief. But Martha ran out to Jesus and expressed her disappointment in His delayed response. She wanted Jesus to heal her brother. Already she knew of Jesus' power, that God would give Jesus whatever He asked, although she probably had no idea Jesus planned to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Answers - Jesus assured the grieving sister of her brother's rising again. Martha understood He was referring to all the righteous rising on the last day, but Jesus seized the moment and made one of the greatest declarations in this Gospel: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He boldly stated He could raise dead sinners from spiritual death and dead bodies from the grave. Jesus raising Lazarus is a picture of Him raising the bodies of believers when He comes again.

Actions - Jesus must have startled Martha and everyone when He said to take the stone away that closed Lazarus's tomb. Martha had to prove her active faith in Jesus and cooperate with Him before He could raise Lazarus. Jesus did not ask her to move every stone in Israel, only one, to see the glory of God. To see His glory means to gain insight into His reputation, character, and attributes. Our faith is reinforced and our joy is restored.

God's Radiance - The men obeyed Jesus and removed the stone. Jesus thanked the Father for hearing His prayer, then commanded with a loud voice of authority for Lazarus to come out. Lazarus had to walk out of that grave at the sound of the Redeemer's voice. As with Martha, our faith allows us to see God at work in hopeless situations. If we believe Jesus' words, we are bound to see the character and faithfulness of God. That is God's glory!