

Lesson 12 – Lazarus, Come Out (John 11:1-57)

It is important to the author that the reader connect the dots on who it is that witnessed the glory of Jesus. Although Mary will be mentioned later in the book, it is important the reader understand that she is present here, in Bethany (John 11:2; 12:3). In this story about Jesus, it is explained that Jesus had a personal life, aside from the business of his ministry. Jesus interacted with many people as we have come to understand thus far in the gospel account. However, Jesus had close friends, who were prominent people in Jewish society (John 11:5, 18, 19). So, when this family encountered a significant health challenge, they sent word for Jesus (John 11:3). What differs about this story, compared to our life experiences today, is that Jesus was recognized as a master physician (John 11:21, 32, 37). It was not a casual journey for Jesus to travel again to Judea. It was a matter of life and death (John 11:8, 16).

Jesus makes it clear to his disciples that this journey into harm's way is justified because of his relationship to Lazarus (John 11:11, 15). Most of us can relate to arriving from out of town to a gathering of family and friends who are mourning the loss of a loved one. Jesus, upon arrival, is greeted first by one sister, Martha, and later by her sister, Mary (John 11:21, 29). The author reveals the intimate discussions between Jesus and the sisters. Martha is first to implore that Jesus could ask God for special grace in this circumstance (John 11:22) and Mary can only acknowledge, if you had but been here this would not have happened (John 11:32). Both sisters, exemplify great faith in Jesus' abilities. Even the Jews, who are not Jesus' disciples, recognized the special ability of Jesus (John 11:37). It is occasions, like this, at funerals or family reunions, that a cross-section of society is gathered together. Here, in the village of Bethany, at the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, many are gathered to mourn the loss of a good man. Jesus is moved by their loss and demonstrates his humanity, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

The author is deliberate in informing us of the foreknowledge of Jesus regarding Lazarus' death (John 11:4, 11, 15). Jesus has already told Martha of his intentions upon his arrival (John 11:25, 40). Yet, when Jesus commands, "*Take away the stone,*" it seems incredulous to Martha, that after four days, Jesus could reanimate a dead body (John 11:39). Jesus truly proves his claim, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" He fully explains, by this deed, what it means to believe the acknowledgment of Martha, "*I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.*" (John 11:27).

From the beginning of this great narrative, John has introduced the idea, that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God (John 1:1). It is the words of Jesus from which true life originates. There is no difference in saying, "*Let there be light*" and "*Lazarus, come out!*" Both are the words of God. Likewise, the creation and its entire splendor and a dead man walking out of a cave are manifestations of God's glory (Psalm 19:1-4; John 11:4, 44). This was an event that stimulated instant belief (John 11:45). It also revealed a startling reality to the religious leadership in Jerusalem (John 11:48). Yes, the days of Jewish influence over the people of God were numbered. The truth about Jesus, "The Resurrection and the Life" would be proven again in a very short time (John 11:50; 12:23; 20:10-17). It is Lazarus' sister Mary who anoints Jesus with costly perfume in honor of His imminent glory (John 12:3-7) and another Mary, Mary Magdalene, who is first to converse with the risen Lord (John 20:16).

Questions:

1. What should the reader of this incredible story understand about who Jesus is?

2. List the facts that demonstrate that Jesus was both a man and God from this account.

3. It is apparent, from this story about Jesus, that some believed in him and others did not (John 11: 45, 46). Describe what Jesus meant in his statement to Thomas, concerning those who would believe although they were not eyewitnesses (John 20:28, 29).

4. The written word of the apostle, whom Jesus loved, is an eyewitness account of Jesus' life upon the earth (John 21:20-25; 1 John 1:1-4). Explain the power of this written account and the purpose for its preservation throughout the ages (John 20:30, 31; 1 John 1:3, 4).

5. Explain what Jesus meant by stating that the raising of Lazarus from the dead would give glory to God's Son (John 11:4). What does it mean to glorify something?

6. The intimate conversations between Jesus and Lazarus' sisters show great faith and confidence in Jesus' ability. This is not unlike Jesus' mother's faith (John 2:5). Jesus had a close relationship with his disciples as noted in John 13:22-25. Describe the difficulty encountered by one so wise and powerful to relate on a personal basis with ordinary people.

7. What does question 6 tell us about God's relationship with man?
