

6.03.18 ~ John 11:1-16, Lazarus is Dead.

Chapter 10 ended with Jesus being confronted by the Jews; they attempted to grab Him, but He escaped and departed Jerusalem, traveling to Bethany by the Jordan, where John had originally been baptizing people who repented of their sins against God.

Read John 11:1-2... We are told of a man named Lazarus who was sick. This man is identified by the village he lived in, Bethany, near Jerusalem, which is about a days walk from Bethany [by the Jordan], where Jesus had gone when He left Jerusalem.

So, there are two Bethany's, here where Jesus is now, and the village where Lazarus, Mary and Martha live, near Jerusalem (cf. **verse 18**).

Notice that John the apostle tells us it was Mary who anointed Jesus' with expensive perfume, although this event won't happen until later in chapter 12:1-3. There were many women named Mary, and so John makes it clear that this Mary is a sister to Martha, and their brother is Lazarus who was sick.

Read John 11:3-6... Mary and Martha had sent word to Jesus [through a messenger] concerning the condition of their brother Lazarus saying, "he whom You love is sick." Jesus responds, saying Lazarus' "sickness will not end in death," but is so that God might be glorified by it.

At first read, this is a really strange response by Jesus, because we know that Lazarus will die from whatever he has. And notice John's narrative (**verses 5-6**) about how much Jesus loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and yet, on hearing that Lazarus is sick, Jesus decides to stay where He is for two more days.

Don't you find that strange? I mean why doesn't Jesus go to Lazarus and heal him, or better yet, why not heal him right then, from where Jesus is? We know from a previous study that Jesus doesn't have to be present to heal someone (See **John 4:46-53**)...

Another thing to consider is that, very likely, Lazarus was already dead when Jesus received the message about him being sick. Think about it, Jesus is one day's journey from Lazarus' village of Bethany, near Jerusalem; Jesus stays two more days where He is, and then He travels at least one day to where Lazarus is - that adds up to four days right? Look at **John 11:17**. It would seem that before the messenger arrived to tell Jesus of Lazarus' condition, Lazarus had already died.

Read John 11:7-10... After delaying for two days, Jesus says, "Let's go to Judea again." The disciples are alarmed at the thought of going back up to Jerusalem, I mean, they left there after the Jews tried to kill Jesus, why in the world would Jesus want to go back there?

Jesus answers them with a really strange response (**verses 9-10**), "there are twelve hours in the day, if anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because

he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

Generally we think of a day being 12 hours of light followed by 12 hours of darkness, although, with the changing seasons there may be more light or less light in a 24 hour day, depending on where you live and whether or not you set your clocks ahead or behind an hour.

But Jesus is not talking about light from the sun or the darkness caused as the earth rotates away from the sun; and there are several verses that help us understand more clearly what He means by what He says here.

John 8:12, "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.'"

The themes of "life" and "Light" permeate John's gospel; the Greek word *Zoë* [our English word *life*] refers to the life Jesus gives His true disciples, spiritual life or eternal life; this is differentiated from the Greek word *bios* also translated "life," but it refers to physical life, given by God to all who are conceived on this earth.

Jesus had *Zoë Life* within Himself, because He is self-existent - He was not created, He is the Creator, eternally existent, the Almighty "I AM," (Exodus 3:14). There was a time when the universe did not exist; but there was never a time when God did not exist. Jesus Christ, the Word [*Logos*], is God, He has always existed.

In Christ is the light and life of God (see **John 1:1-4; 1John 1:5-7**). Without the light there is only darkness.

John 9:4-5, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

Jesus uses "we", because His disciples (all Christians - all those who believe in and follow Christ) are empowered to do the work of God (cf. **Ephesians 2:10**). Those belonging to God are to work "*as long as it is day*," Jesus is the Light of the world, but when He was crucified and put in the tomb, it became "night," void of the Light of the SON, when no one can work."

Do you see the meaning (**John 11:9-10**)? Those who belong to God in Christ, walk in the Light of God's Word, those who don't believe in Christ are walking in darkness; they are walking dead, void of the Life and Light of God!

Read John 11:11-16... After confusing His disciples with His "walking in the day [light] vs stumbling in the night [dark]," Jesus confuses them more (**verses 11-12**) by telling them that Lazarus has "fallen asleep" and He needs to go awaken him.

Note: Sleep is often used in the Bible, as a euphemism for death, when talking about those who belong to God: in the OT the phrase "slept with his fathers" is used for the death of God's people (1Kings 2:10; 11:34); in the NT the phrase "fallen asleep" is used repeatedly for the death of Christians, who physically died but are alive spiritually (Matthew 27:52; Acts 7:60; 1Corinthians 15:6, 51; 1Thessalonians 4:13-15).

It is no wonder that Jesus says (**verse 11**) that He is going to “awaken [Lazarus] out of sleep,” meaning He is going to raise him from the dead. The disciples don’t get it, as is clearly recorded in **verses 12-13**, the disciples respond to Jesus, basically saying, Lazarus is just sleeping, he’ll wake up when he is rested and/or healed from whatever has made him sick.

Jesus clears up the confusion in the minds of the Twelve by telling them plainly (**verse 14**), “Lazarus is dead!” The omniscience of the Lord is evident here, remember (**verse 3**) when the messenger came from Bethany; he told Jesus that Lazarus was sick. But as I previously mentioned, later in the chapter (**verse 17**) it becomes clear that Lazarus must have died before messenger came to Jesus.

Jesus says (**verse 15**) He is glad He wasn’t there, for now He will go to raise Lazarus from the dead; this will be much more powerful in strengthening the disciples’ faith.

Normally Peter says what the other disciples are thinking, e.g., in **John 6:68-69**, when many following Jesus leave, Jesus asks the Twelve if they want to leave too. Peter says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

Thomas [Hebrew] and Didymus [Greek], both mean “the twin”. The words of Thomas clearly display his love for and devotion to Christ, for he, along with the other disciples, would have been aware that it was now dangerous to travel with Jesus in Judea, as the Jewish Religious Leaders were on the lookout for Him, wanting to arrest and do away with Him. This is understood, it would seem, by Thomas saying, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”

The sadness brought about by Lazarus’ death will ultimately turn to joy when Lazarus is raised from the dead by God, proving that those who belong to God in Christ will live forever, bringing glory to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

John 3:36, He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

John 5:26, “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”

John 6:40, “This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”

1John 5:11-12, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

Pastor Mike
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