

Dying to Live

In previous chapters Jesus presented Himself as “life” to various kinds of people. He was “eternal life” to Nicodemus, “the water of life” to the Samaritan woman, the quickening life to the paralyzed man, “the bread of life” to the hungry multitude, the “rivers of living water” to the thirsty worshipers, the “light of life” to the blind man and the “abundant life” to His sheep. Now in this chapter Jesus is *life* in its ultimate expression—resurrection life to a man who faced the greatest and ultimate enemy, death!

Drawing Near: Lord Jesus, open our hearts to Your Spirit as we open Your Word. Breathe upon us the power of Your resurrection life and presence.

Begin by reviewing John’s stated purpose for writing his gospel (John 20:30-31).

The dramatic narrative account in John chapter 11 presents one more great climactic miracle, the seventh and final *sign* which anticipates Jesus’ own resurrection. **Read John 11:1-44.** As you read try to enter into the full range of emotions felt by Mary, Martha, the disciples and Jesus.

1. From the clues given in this chapter what kind of relationship did Jesus have with Mary, Martha and Lazarus? Give verses or phrases that provide evidence.
2. John begins this chapter by describing a growing crisis. With what problem is Jesus presented in verse 3?
3. Although Jesus’ love for this family was exceptional, why didn’t He immediately drop His plans and rush to the side of His friend (verses 4-6, 14-15)?
4. What parallels do you see when you compare John 11:4-6 with Jesus’ teaching in John 9:3?

Jesus could have helped from a distance as he had before (see 4:49-53) but He had other plans.

Preparation for the Miracle

5. When Jesus suggested a trip to Judea what came to the mind of the disciples (verses 7-8)?

6. a. What is the point of Jesus' response in verses 9-10?

b. How is this truth relevant to your own circumstances?

In verses 11-14 Jesus explained further why He needed to go to Bethany. When the disciples failed to understand the severity of the situation Jesus put things very plainly (verse 14).

7. What does Thomas' bold remark in verse 16 indicate about His faith in Jesus?

Throughout the ancient world the fear of death was universal. Death was a grim adversary that everyone feared and none could defeat. Jesus would soon remove that sting forever!

The Arrival of Jesus

As Jesus approached the small village of Bethany near Jerusalem Martha went out to meet Him. Picture the highly emotional scene described in verses 17-21. When Jesus failed to come quickly and Lazarus died these two women were at a loss to understand what had gone wrong.

8. What elements of doubt and faith do you see in Martha's statements to Jesus in verses 21-27?

In verse 25 Jesus challenges Martha with a deeper revelation of Himself, highlighting another awesome aspect of His person as the great "I AM." Thoughtfully **reread verses 25-26.**

9. Express in your own words what Jesus is declaring to Martha and to all of us.

a. About Himself

b. About life

c. About death

10. Consider and answer the question at the end of verse 26 as if it were addressed to you.

As we seek to see Jesus as Martha did there is much we understand and much more that we have yet to learn about the Christ Who dwells in our midst (verse 27).

Jesus and His small entourage remained quietly on the outskirts of Bethany where He and Martha had shared such a remarkable conversation regarding the revelation that Jesus was the One Who brought people back to life. Now He waited patiently for Mary to come and see Him. When Jesus met with Mary there were a sizeable number of mourners with her. All were likely wailing loudly in the tradition of the Jewish lament.

11. a. What emotion seems to lie behind Mary's words to Jesus (verse 32)?
- b. What was Jesus' response to the scene described in verses 33-35?

The phrase "deeply moved," (NIV) does not adequately convey the underlying Greek verb *embrimaomai*, also used in 11:38, which has the connotation of being angry in spirit and very agitated. It is likely that Jesus' anger arose from the profound awareness of all the hurt and tragedy that comes from death, which is the result of sin (Romans 5:12, 6:23).

Jesus wept like the others, but His weeping was in contrast to the loud wailing of the mourners. The Greek verb *dakruo*, used only here in the New Testament, means quietly bursting into tears.

12. What does verse 35 tell us about the God whom Jesus was revealing?
13. As the scene of these events continued to unfold emotions ran high. From verses 36 and 37 describe the conflicting emotions of the Jews who sat with the grieving sisters.
14. Do you think anyone expected a miracle at this point? Why or why not?

The Miracle

Reread John 11:38-44 several times. Imagine that you are a personal witness of this event.

15. Jesus ordered the mourners to "take away" the stone from the entrance of the tomb (verse 39). How does Martha's objection highlight the greatness of this sign?
16. Of what did Jesus remind them in verse 40?

After Jesus' prayer to the Father, He stood quietly for a moment, then shocking them all, Jesus shouted loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" Jesus could have healed Lazarus while he was still sick with a word of command, but now He uttered a mightier word across a much greater distance—that between the living and the dead!

17. In verse 44 Jesus commanded that Lazarus be unbound and let go. What spiritual application can you make of this story and of this final command of Jesus? (Consider Luke 4:18).

18. How does the overcoming of the corruption of the body in the raising of Lazarus foreshadow the resurrection of believers?

19. In what ways will this chapter change the way you respond to personal difficulty or the apparent delay of God?

The astounding miracle of raising Lazarus convinced the Jewish leaders that they would have to take more drastic and decisive action against Jesus. John recorded this decision in the closing verses of chapter 11.

20. Carefully **read John 11:45-53 and Jesus' response in verses 54-57**. Find and list the significant points you see in each of these sections.
Verses 45-53

Verses 54-57

The stage has now been set for the greatest drama in history. Jesus was on His way to be sacrificed as the Passover Lamb at Calvary. In closing, take time to meditate on what Jesus was preparing to do for us, and by contrast, what evil men were preparing to do to Him.
"Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them." Psalm 111:2