

# John – An In-Depth Study

## [Part 14]

**John 11:1-5** [NIV] *“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.’ Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”*

The village of Bethany was located about two miles east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho.

It was near enough to Jerusalem for Jesus and His disciples to be in danger from the Jewish authorities, but far enough away as to not attract their attention prematurely.

Lazarus, means *“God is my help”* fell ill and the sisters sent word to Jesus to notify Him, knowing that Jesus would respond and come to their home.

We should never hesitate to ask Jesus for help and expect Him to assist us, because we see the great love and compassion He has for all humanity.

The healing would enable them to see the glory of God in action, but there was more to this healing.

Again and again in the gospel of John, Jesus refers to His glory in connection with His sacrifice on the cross. [**John 7:39; John 12:16; John 12:23; John 13:31-32; John 17:4**]

Jesus obviously regarded the sacrifice on the cross as the supreme act to glorify God the Father but also our sacrifice was the way to bring glory to God the Father.

Jesus knew that the cost of helping humans was the sacrifice on the cross and He was willing and well prepared to pay that supreme cost.

Every human who takes up the cross and follows Jesus will bring glory to the Creator God and God the Father. [**Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**]

When any trial comes upon us look on it as an opportunity to bring glory to God. [**1 Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 9:13**]

**John 11:6-16** [NIV] *“Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea.’ ‘But Rabbi,’ they said, ‘a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.’ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’ His disciples replied, ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.’ Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’”*

Why did Jesus delay His response to this call from a family that He loved?

The following reasons have been offered by commentators of the scriptures.

The delay ensured that Lazarus was really dead.

A person who had been dead for days would really make the miracle more impressive.

As the apostle John has already shown, Jesus always worked to His own agenda and would not be distracted from it by any other person. [**John 2:1-11; John 7:1-10**]

Jesus always did things because He chose to do them not as a result of others' pressure, persuasion or compelling Him to act.

To go to Jerusalem at that time was, to the disciples, a sure way to commit suicide.

*"Twelve hours in the day"* – certain things are shown to us about our fulfilling the work that God has given us in this short statement of Jesus Christ.

Day is symbolic of the understanding of the truth of God's Word, the Christian Bible, and night absence of revealed knowledge.

If we seek to do God's work without the revelation of His Word, we will stumble and lead others astray.

The hours of daylight should be enough time to do the work, there is no need for rushed haste.

God will give us all the time we need to fulfil the work He personally has for us to do if we do **not** waste the time we have been given. [**Ephesians 5:16**]

Thomas' response demonstrated the love and dedication that all the disciples had for their Master Jesus Christ.

They did **not** understand, as yet, why Jesus Christ had to die, but out of loyalty were willing to follow Him, whatever the outcome, the highest form of courage.

**John 11:17-19** [NIV] *"On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother."*

Mourning in Christ's day lasted for seven days, of which the first three were days of weeping.

When death came respect for the dead and sympathy for the mourners were an essential part of Jewish duty. It would be to a household filled with sympathisers that Jesus came that day.

**John 11:20-27** [NIV] *"When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she told him, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'"*

The different characteristics of Martha and Mary are illustrated in this short passage of scripture.

Martha is a person who liked action and as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming she ran to meet Him, Mary remained seated within the house. [Also read **Luke 10:38-42**]

Martha's deep concern for her brother led to a rebuke but also a faith in Jesus that nothing could shake.

Jesus has power over life and death as well as the power to forgive sins.

This is because Jesus is the Creator of all physical life. [**John 1:3; Colossians 1:16**]

Jesus is life so He can restore life to any human being.

Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, His power and authority, has spiritual life that **no** physical death can conquer or diminish in any way.

When we realise this fact and how wonderful it is, how can we but commit our lives to Jesus Christ. **[Romans 12:1]**

Such belief brings with it wonderful assurance and peace of mind. **[John 14:27; John 14:15-19; Hebrews 13:5]**

Martha's response to Jesus is exactly what He wants from all of us.

### **Belief in the resurrection from physical death is essential for every Christian.**

Please download and study our articles 'The Resurrection, Our Hope For The Future' and 'The Power Of The Resurrection Can Be Ours Today' found under general heading 'Resurrection.'

**John 11:28-38** [NIV] *"And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here,' she said, 'and is asking for you.' When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 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.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance."*

These verses show the deep love and compassion Jesus had for Lazarus and his family and is an example of the love and compassion He has for all humanity.

The Greek word translated "groaned" or "moved" is "ēmbriḗmaōmai" meaning "indignation" or "to sigh with chagrin."

Mixed with His love and compassion Jesus was distressed that the people did **not** understand who He was after all the miracles He had done and the claims He had made.

Jesus had already raised others from the dead, including Jairus' daughter **[Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:41-42; Luke 8:40-56]** and widow's son. **[Luke 7:11-17]**

**John 11:39-44** [NIV] *"'Take away the stone,' he said. 'But, Lord,' said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.' Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'"*

After four days the dead would be a repulsive sight of a putrefying corpse.

The Word of God then spoke a command, and even death was powerless to oppose this command.

Jesus sought only to glorify God the Father **not** Himself by this miracle, for the power came from God the Father.

So much of what we do is attempted in our own power and is designed for our own prestige.

Everything that Jesus did was due to the power of God the Father in Him and designed to bring glory to God the Father.

**John 15:5-8** [NIV] *“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. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Anything of lasting value in our lives is what we do through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, working in and through us.

Thus it also will be to the glory of Christ and God the Father.

**John 11:45-53** [NIV] *“Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. So from that day on they plotted to take his life.”*

Even when confronted point-blank with the power of Jesus’ deity, some refused to believe.

These eye-witnesses not only rejected Jesus, they plotted to murder Him, out of envy and pride.

Beware of our pride!

If we become so hardened that we refuse to accept Jesus as the Son of God, because we find it too difficult to admit we are wrong.

The Creator God does exist and our future existence totally depends on accepting Jesus Christ as His Son and our **only** Saviour from eternal death.

In the Sanhedrin there were both Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees were **not** a political party, their sole interest was in living according to every detail of the law, and cared **not** who governed them as long as they could continue in meticulous obedience to the law.

The Sadducees were an intensely political party. They were also collaborating with the Romans.

So long as they were allowed to retain and enjoy their wealth, comfort and position of authority, they were well-content to collaborate with the Roman authorities.

All the priests were Sadducees and it is clear that it was the priests who dominated this special meeting.

The Sadducees were fearful that Jesus might gain a following and raise a rebellion against the government.

Rome was essentially tolerant and allowed regional authorities certain limited powers so that they could dominate the region with a limited military force.

Any uprising would bring about influx of military forces to crush it and the local governing powers would lose their rule.

This is exactly what the priests feared Jesus would bring about.

Right or wrong did **not** enter the minds of these men, only the saving of their future comfort and their authority.

What these men feared did happen in AD70. How different things might have been if these men had accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

It was the Jewish belief that when the high priest asked God's counsel for the nation, God would speak through him, and send His message through him.

In this case the high priest was also a prophet, this was an example of dramatic irony.

Jesus was to die, **not** only for the Jewish nation but for all humanity.

**John 11:54-57** [NIV] *“Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, ‘What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the Feast at all?’ But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.”*

The purifications were carried out in the temple and meant a time of waiting during which Jesus was discussed because of the well-known clash between Him and the temple authorities.

Jesus was now classified as an outlaw, and the authorities may have offered a reward for information that led to His apprehension, it may be that it was this reward that Judas sought and received.