

5. Power over Death

John 11: 1-53

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin,^[b] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles^[c] off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated 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 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 on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.^[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who 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 coming into the world."

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved^[e] in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, 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 the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

1. What is the purpose of the passage? Why did God choose to incorporate this story into the Gospel of John narrative?

While there are many things that we can learn from this passage regarding Jesus' power over death, His perfect timing, and his compassion for man, the purpose of this passage is laid out plainly in John 11:4 & 15

John 11:4 - But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

John 11:14 - and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

We cannot underestimate the significance of Jesus' own commentary on His work. God's glory is the unifying thread throughout all of Scripture, and the display of His glory for all men is the purpose of all of creation. Jesus himself shares that this event happened so that God's glory may be displayed.

2. What did Jesus mean when he said to his disciples, "Are there not 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." (John 11:9-10)

Jesus was telling His disciples that if they walk in God's will, then only God's plan will be accomplished. When God's purpose for Jesus was ministry, he will minister and not be taken, when God's purpose for Jesus was crucifixion, then Jesus will be crucified. God's plan cannot be thwarted.

John 7:30 - So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come

The sense of the allegorical answer is this: "The time appointed to me by God for working is not yet elapsed; as long as it lasts, no one can do anything to me; but when it shall have come to an end, I shall fall into the hands of my enemies, like him who walketh in the night, and who stumbleth, because he is without light." In this way Jesus sets aside the anxiety of His disciples, on the one hand, by directing their attention to the fact that, as His time is not yet expired, He is safe from the apprehended dangers; and, on the other, by reminding them ([John 11:10](#)) that He must make use of the time apportioned to Him, before it come to an end.

Heinrich Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/meyer/john/11.htm>

3. What can we learn about Jesus perfect timing by observing that Jesus delayed in going to heal Lazarus before he died?

Jesus delay seems like it is from lack of caring. He hears that Lazarus is sick and he delays in going to see him. This delay was noticed by the sisters as it is the first thing that they both say to him when he arrives. Jesus comments on the reason for His delay to the disciples in John 11:15 ¹⁵ *and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.*”

What can we learn from this delay?

- a. God’s timing is not our timing. God always has a plan for good and sometimes we see our plans as the only our best way for things to work out (i.e. Jesus comes and heals Lazarus from the brink of death and demonstrates his power.). It is too easy for us to think that our plan is best, and almost think that God needs to answer to us to accomplish our will. God responds to this way of thinking in Job 40. When Job begins to vindicate himself in response to his “friends” rebukes, he starts to think of himself as righteous and as his suffering as unwarranted and unfair. He begins to think that God should have acted differently. This is a dangerous thought pattern as it starts to put God in a position of answering to us – imagine that! Listen to God’s response.

Job 40:6-9 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:
⁷ “Dress for action^[a] like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. ⁸ Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? ⁹ Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?

- b. God works all things together for good. He promises to work all things for our sanctification, and ultimately to save those whom he has called. Even when his timing is not our we must rest in faith in the fact that He has a plan and He will work all things together for good in His time.

Romans 8:28-30 - ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^[h] for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

4. Mary & Martha both responded to Jesus’ arrival differently. Their response shows how each of them had faith, but an incomplete understanding of Jesus plan and sovereignty. Jesus does not rebuke them for their response, but comforts them. Describe their responses and Jesus reactions to them.

Mary – remained in the house (mad that it took Jesus so long?). Mary was the one who anointed Jesus feet with oil and her hair previously. Mary fell down at Jesus feet and told Him that if Jesus was there Lazarus would not have died. **Mary was weeping over the loss of her brother, and possibly over the thought that Jesus had failed her. She had faith, but was challenged when Jesus did not act the way that she had planned.** DO we sometimes feel like this when God does not answer our prayers the way that we pray. He promises to always hear us, but He is in control, and His ways are higher than ours – we need to understand that God will not always answer our prayers the way that we pray. He is God, not us. Our part is to offer our petitions to Him, and trust that He will respond to them in a way that is best.

Isaiah 55:8-9 - For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Martha – Runs out to meet him (She was the active person) Martha said to Jesus, If you had been here my brother would not have died, but even now I know God will give you what you wish. **Martha seems to be less affected by the delay in Jesus arrival, and seems to believe that God has a plan for this. Even so, she does not believe that Jesus will (or could) raise her brother from the dead.** When Jesus tells her that her brother will rise, she responds that she knows he will in the last days – the resurrection. Jesus reminds her that He is the resurrection. Martha seems to have a better view of Jesus and God’s eternal plan. In order for us to make sense of things it is often necessary for us to try to view things from God’s perspective. Martha understands that there is more here at work than just the physical life.

5. **John 11:33 & 38 tell us that Jesus was deeply moved by the hurt caused by the death of Lazarus. John 11:35 tells us simply, “Jesus wept.” What was so moving to Jesus, and why do you think he wept with them if He know that He was there to raise Lazarus from the dead?**

- a. **Jesus was distressed because of their unbelief. This is, I believe the primary reason Jesus responded this way.** He came into the world to save sinners and they rejected Him and did not believe Him. He is the resurrection and the life, and here he is in a funeral service and people are mourning as if there is no hope.

John 11:33 - When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved** in his spirit and greatly troubled.

John 11:37-38 - ³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” ³⁸ Then Jesus, **deeply moved again**, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

b. **Jesus was moved by the pain and loss that his friends were experiencing.** Interesting that although He knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead, and turn their pain into joy, he took the time to feel their pain, and be with them in the pain. Often pain and loss is necessary for us to see God for who he is.

c. **Jesus was witnessing the effects of sin, and may have wept for all of the effects that sin brought into the world.** This was not how it was created to be, and the effects of sin are far reaching. Jesus was witnessing that loss and separation, that feeling of helplessness that we cannot overcome death.

Romans 5:12 - ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men^[a] because all sinned

Romans 7:24-25a - ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord....

d. **Jesus loves us, and feels our pain and suffering.** He is with us in those dark times when this world is crashing in on us, and we feel despair, helpless, and alone. He promises to never leave us or forsake us. Jesus was at the funeral, but his presence at the funeral brings life to it as well.

Matthew 23:37 - ³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Mark 6:34 - When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Hebrews 13:5-8 - ⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**" ⁶ So we can confidently say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?**" ⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**

6. **John 11:41-43 is Jesus prayer to God to raise Lazarus. How does this demonstrate a perfect faith? Why did Jesus thank God for hearing him? Does this mean that if we pray with this faith or conviction that all our prayers will be answered in the same way?**

John 11:41-43 - ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

Jesus prayed thanking God for hearing Him before he even began his prayer. He knows that God always hears him, and he knows that God will hear and act. Jesus prays knowing the outcome of the event which is different that our prayers as we do not know the plans of God. **Sometimes it is difficult to remember that God hears all our prayers even when He delays in answering them, or does not answer them the way that we ask.**

Jesus knew the plan of God, and prayed knowing the outcome. This is not the way that we can pray because we do not know God's plan and outcome. It would be foolish for us to think otherwise. This is, however a great example of prayer so focused on the glory of God. Jesus prayed that the people around Him might believe. **When our eyes are on God we can see that He will work all things together for the plan to reconcile man to Himself.**

- 7. John 11:45-53 show us the response of the Pharisees who saw Jesus as a threat to their power and control. They knew that if they gave into Jesus they might lose their position of leadership in Israel. How do we sometimes today have to make choices to follow Jesus even though there may be sacrifices here on earth.**

There are two responses to this great display of power and of God's will. Some believed, and others were so resistant, so concerned with their own position or riches, or pride that they could not believe.

John 11:45-53 - ⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ **He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.**

John 11:51-52 show us that even in resistance to Jesus, God is still accomplishing His plans. Even in resistance to His will, rebellion against Him, and in the hearts of those that turn from Him, God is accomplishing His plan. Think of it , God was working in the hearts of those that rejected Him to still carry out His plan. How often we forget that God has control over the thoughts and heart of those that oppose Him. He is sovereign over the enemy too. God is in control, over everything.

Romans 8:35-39 (KJV) - ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Conclusion: Jesus performed this resurrection so that the disciples and those around Him might believe (John 11:15). The resurrection is one of the most important doctrines of the faith. Christ's resurrection is proof to us that He has forgiven our sins, and given us a new hope. I Corinthians 15 tells us of the implications of the resurrection, and how our salvation is linked up in Jesus resurrection. Thanks to God for raising Jesus from the dead, and promising to raise us from our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:1-22 - Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the

resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Romans 5:12-13 - ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men^[a] because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 - ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ **When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:**

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ **“O death, where is your victory?**

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

⁵⁸ **Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**