



JOHN 11:1-46 | THE SEVENTH SIGN: THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

- Verse 1 –
  - A period of time has passed between the previous chapter and this chapter, likely 3-4 months.
  - This is the first we have been introduced to Lazarus, and his account is not mentioned in any other book.
  - The Lazarus of Luke 16 in the story of the Rich man and Lazarus is a different person.
  - Bethany is a town east of Jerusalem, at the foot of the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.
- Verse 2 –
  - At the time of the sickness, this had not yet occurred. We will read more of it in this Gospel beginning in John 12:3.
  - Clearly the Gospel was written after the full account taken place in history and the incident with Mary was well-known among those who would read the fourth Gospel.
- Verse 3 –
  - When comparing this verse along with verse 5 and verse 36, it begs the question why the disciple **whom Jesus loved** (Jn. 13:23, and others) is almost never considered to be Lazarus.
  - If scripture interprets itself, this is really the only conclusion that can be made.
- Verse 4 –
  - Jesus clearly had knowledge of the future, and thus that **This sickness is not unto death**. That is, that its *purpose* was not death, but rather **for the glory of God** and **that the Son of God might be glorified thereby**.
- Verses 5-6 –
  - There is a contrast in Greek that is not visible in English. The contrast is between staying two days longer and loving Lazarus and his sisters. The verses literally say, “When Jesus heard he was sick, then indeed He remained”
  - Because there was a hidden *purpose* to the death, Jesus remained **two days still in the same place** beyond the Jordan.
- Verses 7-8 –
  - After waiting for two days, the disciples became perplexed that Jesus now suddenly wanted to **go into Judaea again**.
  - They knew of the danger of Judaea and knew that for two days Jesus had not felt the need to be near Lazarus.
- Verses 9-10 –
  - These words are clearly an illustration, with figurative meaning.
  - The question with any illustration or figure is always “what does it illustrate, what does it figure?”
  - In this case, though the answer is not stated, the meaning seems to be, “If you walk with me, you’ll discover that I have ‘light’ that keeps you from stumbling.”
- Verses 11-13 -
  - Our Lord again spoke *figuratively* but it was taken *literally* and, once again, caused confusion. It makes sense that the disciples thought He spoke figuratively because Jesus says He will **awake him out of**

**sleep.** Doubtless they were perplexed why Jesus would go **awake him**, but likely were not considering resurrection (or at least were not willing to verbalize it).

- Note that *if* Lazarus wrote the fourth Gospel, he was certainly *not* an eyewitness to these events. However, the kind of information given in these verses fits a *second-hand account* perfectly.
- Verses 14-15 –
  - Seeing their confusion, Jesus stated **plainly, Lazarus is dead** (v. 14). That is certainly about as plain as you can get. Jesus rejoices because the disciples will **believe** (v. 15).
  - What did He want them to believe? Since the purpose of the Gospel is stated in John 20:31, **that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and since this identity issue had been the only issue in context, we should not conclude that the disciples needed to *believe* in the same manner as or on the same content as our current belief.
- Verse 16 –
  - This is one of three Biblically recorded statements of Thomas. It is impossible to tell whether this is said in frustration or resolved commitment.
  - Since the experience at Caesarea Philippi had already occurred, where Jesus said, **if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me** (Mt. 16:24), there is reason to take it positively. With Thomas' later doubt, one could also argue negatively.
- Verse 17 –
  - Comparing v. 6 and estimating timelines, it certainly was no surprise that Lazarus was four days in the tomb.
- Verse 19 –
  - It is **the Jews** from Jerusalem that are coming, understood with the context of verse 18.
  - This is indication that the family was well-known and appreciated in the broader Jerusalem community.
  - The word **comfort** is παραμυθέομαι [paramutheomai], from *para* (to come alongside) and *muthos* (stories, from which we get "myth," though our understanding of myth goes beyond the Greek word). From *paramuthos* comes the name "Barnabas," which means "encourager."
- Verse 20 –
  - There is no information on whether Mary heard the information. The insertion of the word **still** implies that Mary was perhaps "miffed."
  - The Greek can only be taken to say that "Martha heard and went while Mary was in the house and had not heard."
- Verses 21-22 –
  - As much of a negative review that Martha often gets, we should note the tremendous faith shown in these two verses.
- Verses 23-24 –
  - Jesus makes a very clear statement in verse 23, but Martha takes it the same as the comforters who had been there. She does not immediately take it to be a "here and now" statement.
  - Not only did she display faith, but Martha also displays Biblical knowledge. See Daniel 12:2, for example.
- Verses 25-26 –
  - To claim to be **the resurrection, and the life** is the claim to be Messiah. The Jewish belief is clearly that Messiah will come (to the Mount of Olives) and provide resurrection and life to all who believe in Messiah, and **though h were dead, yet shall he live** (v. 25). In verse 26, those who **liveth** must be taken in context with verse 25, as *the resurrected Jewish believers on the last day*. These are the ones that **shall never die**, for they shall have resurrected bodies, in which mortal has given way to immortality.
  - When Jesus said, **Believest thou this?** it includes the claim that Jesus was Messiah, for the **I** in **I am the resurrection** is emphatic.