

John Chapter 11

BACK FROM THE GRAVE

Introduction

Death is usually the last thing we want to talk about. It makes us feel uncomfortable, awkward, and we recoil when someone brings the subject up. One of the reasons we fear death is that, in spite of all our medical achievements, we haven't been able to conquer it.

In this chapter, we are going to penetrate, however slightly, that unyielding mystery. We're going to examine the account of a man raised from the dead—a man brought back from beyond-by the only One who has conquered death, Jesus Christ.

Study Questions

Read John 11: 1-44

Before we enter into the rich emotions of this story, let's gain an understanding of how this incident fits into the greater scheme of John's Gospel. The raising of Lazarus from the dead is the seventh and last sign of Jesus that John records. It is the climatic sign because it illustrates beyond doubt Jesus' power to give life (5:21) and triumph over death.

This miracle most fittingly concludes the series of signs and forms the transition to the story of the passion ... [because] it shows that Jesus gives life only by giving his life. The raising of Lazarus leads directly to the death of Jesus [11: 45-53].

- What are the previous six signs shown in John's Gospel and what does each sign illustrate?

1st Sign: _____

2nd Sign: _____

3rd Sign: _____

4th Sign: _____

5th Sign: _____

6th Sign: _____

7th Sign: _____

- How would you describe Jesus' relationship with this family? (v 1-5)
-
-

- Why is Jesus returning to Lazarus at this time (v 11-15) instead of going there when he was told Lazarus was sick (v3).
-
-

- a). Have you ever felt that God was not listening when you prayed? b). How did you deal with this? c). How does the way in which Jesus postponed his response to the sister's request help you in understanding your own prayer life? d). How would you feel if you were Martha or Mary and you heard that Jesus had finally arrived?
-
-

- How is Mary's greeting like and unlike Martha's?
-
-

- Since Jesus knew he was going to raise Lazarus (11:11), how do you account for his weeping (vv33-35).
-
-

Living Insights

Martha needed to know that Jesus was in control. Mary needed to know that Jesus cared. And without rebukes or reservations, He met each sister where she was, whether standing or prostrate and whether needing intellectual or emotional support.

From this dramatic even that quaked the Judean countryside, two tremors of truth ripple through the centuries to touch our lives today:

- **When delay occurs, God has a better time and a better way.**
- **When death occurs, God has a better plan and a better purpose.**

- 1. If your best friend did not come when you needed him/her, how would you feel?**
 - a. very angry
 - b. deserted
 - c. hurt
 - d. assume there was a good reason
 - e. terrible, but I would never show it

- 2. Why do you think Jesus delayed two days before setting out to see Lazarus?**
 - a. he knew he couldn't make it before Lazarus' death
 - b. he was warned that people were out to kill him
 - c. he needed time to prepare himself
 - d. God had a greater purpose in mind

- 3. Why do you think Jesus told his disciples that Lazarus was sleeping at first when he knew that Lazarus was dead?**
 - a. he didn't want to deal with their shock
 - b. he wanted to deal with their shock at a later time
 - c. he needed time to work through his own feelings first
 - d. he didn't want them to think the situation was hopeless

- 4. Jesus did not cry when he got word of Lazarus' death, but he did cry when he went with Mary to the tomb. Why?**
 - a. he knew he could raise Lazarus, but he felt for the mourners
 - b. the reality didn't sink in until he saw the tomb personally
 - c. he was glad Lazarus was dead so he could show his power, but death is horrible even so
 - d. he cried because Mary was crying

- 5. If you had been there and saw Jesus crying, how would you have felt?**
 - a. embarrassed for him: Grown men don't cry
 - b. relieved: It's okay to cry
 - c. awkward: Let's get on with it
 - d. mad: you could have done something if you had gotten here earlier, and now all you can do is blubber
 - e. comforted: He really cared.

- 6. Why did Jesus ask the friends to "take away the stone" (v.38) and "take off the grave clothes and let him go" ?**
 - a. he needed their help
 - b. he didn't like the smell
 - c. he wanted to convince them that Lazarus had really been dead
 - d. he wanted them to be part of the healing process
 - e. he always works in cooperation with human instruments

MY OWN STORY

1. How do you handle grief—particularly unexpected death?

- a. pretend nothing has happened
- b. keep everything inside
- c. get angry at God
- d. isolate myself from everybody
- e. call my friends and talk, talk, talk
- f. try to put on a brave front
- g. keep busy
- h. let it all out

2. What have you found helpful when you are called upon to help a friend who is undergoing grief?

- a. share some Scripture
- b. just be present and say nothing
- c. wait three days and call
- d. bring food/flowers/book
- e. take this person away for a day in the mountains
- f. do a lot of hugging/touching
- g. listen to their reminiscences
- h. encourage them to say what they're really feeling

Conclusion

When you grieve, when you're confused, yes, and even when you're angry, don't try to hide your feelings from God and pretend everything's alright. He knows you better than that. And since He is the Truth, He can handle the truth. Remember, "We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. ... We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4: 14-16).