

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

Tel/ Fax: 020 8340 1566

No: 86

### "The seventh of the signs" - Jesus raises the dead.

Brief Talk on John 11: 1-44

**Read** John 11:1-44

#### **Introduction**

A message is brought to Jesus from Martha and Mary that their brother Lazarus is sick (verse 3). And down through the centuries the world over, frightened, hard-pressed people in pain, calamity and anxiety have, like Martha and Mary sought the help of Jesus. Their first thought is--"Let us tell Jesus our trouble, and seek His help." They know that somehow Jesus is not 'shut out' as others are, but can come in. That helps—to know that we are not alone and that Jesus knows and cares, and able to help. It is enough perhaps, and often best, for us to act as did Martha and Mary, to lay our trouble at Jesus' feet.

However, verses 4-16 record the "strange tardiness" of Jesus. Jesus didn't say "We will come at once," but He waited two days. And Martha and Mary in loving anxiety watched and waited while the flickering life of their brother sank lower and lower, and went out. Jesus hadn't come. Why? What was the reason for Jesus' delay?

Verse 4 is very important, Jesus said, 'This illness is "Not unto death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it".'-To express this in other words--The primary purpose of Lazarus' illness was not death—but that ultimately people might see the glory of God and believe in Jesus as the Lord of eternal life and Saviour of the world. Jesus loved Lazarus, but He had a whole world to save, so, for our sake He stayed two days where He was.

In spiritual matters it is the common experience of all of us to have to learn to wait for God, who often seems to our hot impatient hearts to be so slow to act that we grow peevish toward Him, and cannot feel that He cares about us--else surely He would be swifter to help us. From the experience of Martha and Mary we should learn that God sets us in this world and asks us not to fidget and fume and fuss; not to give up hope, but to wait for God even in the dark and cold knowing that God will surely come.

## Questions for discussion

1. If your best friend did not come when you needed him/her, how would you feel; (a) very angry, (b) deserted, © 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? (vv.4-6) (a) he knew he couldn't make it before Lazarus' death (b) he was warned that people were out to kill him © he needed time to prepare himself (d) God had a greater purpose in mind? See also (vv.11-15). What do the disciples fear instead? (vv 8, 16)  

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

---
4. How long had Lazarus been dead by the time Jesus arrived? How would you feel if you were Martha or Mary and you heard that Jesus had finally arrived?  

---

**Comment** : On hearing the news Jesus says in v 4 that this sickness will not end in death, that is it won't be final, Jesus knows what he is about to do - raise a corpse from the grave. This will be for God's glory so that the Son will be glorified through it. In other words something so mind - blowing is going to occur which will reveal God's power and character through the work of his Son. So in Jesus we see that this is the God who raises the dead and will raise the dead at the last day and he will do it through his Son. One commentator has remarked that had Jesus not prefixed his command with the name 'Lazarus,' all the graves in Jerusalem would have given up their dead on that day; such is the authoritative voice of the Son of God.

5. Have you ever felt like God was not listening when you prayed? How did you deal with this? How does the way in which Jesus postponed his response to the sisters' request help you in understanding your own prayer life?

---

---

6. What do you learn about Martha from the way she talks with Jesus in verses 21– 27? How does Jesus stretch her faith by his claim in verse 25 and how does this relate to his claim in John 10:9?

---

---

7. How does Jesus' response to Lazarus' death and Mary's weeping (v35) help you to trust him more? If you had been there and saw Jesus crying (vv33-37), how would you have felt: (a) embarrassed for him because "grown men don't cry", (b) relieved because it is ok to cry, (c) awkward: let's get on with it, (d) mad: you could have done something if you had been here earlier, and now all you can do is sob, (e) comforted: he really cared?

---

---

8. 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 a part of the healing process, (e) he always works in cooperation with human instruments? Any more suggestions?

---

---

## Conclusion

The seventh Great Sign--the raising of Lazarus resulted in many believing in Jesus. And on the other hand it aroused such opposition from unbelievers that the following chapters of John's Gospel describe the plot to kill Jesus.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in order to give to us the sign that His life giving power is greater than death. This sign tells believers that death is not the full-stop marking the end of the sentence of existence but only a comma--that death is not the terminus of life, but only a junction between the seen and the unseen, the temporary and the eternal--and that life goes on beyond the death of the body

The raising of Lazarus from the dead gives us a sign which throws light on the hereafter. It appears to me that since Jesus could call Lazarus back from death He made it clear that beyond death Christians are in close fellowship with Jesus Christ. Lazarus, although dead, heard the voice of Jesus and responded. In this present world Jesus Christ is with believers--though unseen. Death only removes the veil of physical senses, and then we shall see Him. So death is to be "at home with the Lord." Because of the seventh great sign, death has lost its sting and victory.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in order to give us the sign that He is Lord of Life eternal. And when we believe in Him with active, responsive, obedient faith, His gift to us is Eternal life, which is not brought to an end by death.

John wrote his Gospel around seven signs given by Jesus. The incidents and teachings recorded by John all either lead up to, or develop out of these seven signs. John's Gospel can only be understood and fully appreciated when we see John's plan as stated in John 20:30, 31. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

**but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."**