

JOHN

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to John chapter 11 as we look at the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Now, remember last time we looked at the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and His love, His compassion towards His sheep, you and me. This evening we are going to see that love and compassion of Jesus, the Good Shepherd being poured out upon a family.

Also, keep in mind that as we read through this section, what we see as delay's, God sees as perfect timing!

And as we conclude this evening may you see that the solution to your problem is not something but someone and that someone is the person of Jesus Christ!

Now before we dig into this chapter, let me share this with you. A story that helps put things into perspective for us. We are told,

Dr. Kenneth Meyer tells about flying into Chicago's O'Hare Airport on a certain occasion. As the big plane passed over the expressway, Meyer noticed a colossal traffic jam. He also saw that many people were getting out of their cars. Some were standing on their bumpers, straining to see what was going on.

As Dr. Meyer glanced northward, he saw what they could not possibly see – the telltale flash of red lights. Meyer knew the problem would be taken care of quickly, so after the plane landed at O'Hare and he proceeded towards his car, he had a completely different perspective from the average traveler on the expressway. He knew he would soon be home. Perspective makes all the difference. We are earthbound creatures, but if we could somehow look down upon the traffic jams in our lives, we would react much differently. . . .

Our perspective makes all the difference! Do we see our problems from above or from ground level?

In the story of Lazarus' death and resurrection in John 11, both perspectives are evident. We see the ground-level perspective in Mary and Martha and the divine perspective in our Lord. This passage is good medicine for our hearts because Lazarus' death is symbolic of the extremities [boundaries] we encounter in life, the difficulties that come to all of us, whether the death of a loved one, the loss of our position, or the erring of a child. Lazarus' death symbolizes all of these things. Our Lord's approach also shows us how our heavenly Father deals with us in the midst of the problems we face. This story teaches us about perspective.

- R. Kent Hughes, John, pp. 279-280

I believe the Lord has some valuable lessons for us to learn in this chapter. So, let's begin reading in John chapter 11, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JOHN 11

VERSES 1-3

Bethany was located on the east side of the Mount of Olives about two miles from Jerusalem and this is where the friends of Jesus lived; Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Because of this relationship, Mary and Martha send news to Jesus that His friend, Lazarus, their brother, is very sick.

What is interesting is that they didn't tell Jesus what to do. They didn't tell Jesus how He should heal him, they are just letting Him know of a need they have.

I think that is a powerful and important lesson for us to learn. We should not be telling God what to do. Yes, we are to give Him our requests, what is upon our heart, and then leave it at His feet to deal with. You see, He will do what is best.

At this point Jesus was about a day's journey away from Bethany, in Bethabara some 20 or so miles away in the area of Perea. (John 1:28; John 10:40)

Also, Mary and Martha, in speaking of Jesus and His relationship with their brother Lazarus said, "**Lord, behold, He whom you love is sick.**"

The Greek word for "**love**" is PHILEO which speaks of a brotherly type of love, a friendship. That is how they saw it but it is not how God sees it as we shall see in a few minutes.

And one last point before we move on. John tells us that this is the Mary who anointed Jesus with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair!

John wrote this epistle in around 90 A. D. and thus, some 60 years after this event John remembers what this woman did. Her love for the Lord was remembered!

VERSES 4-6

Notice that Jesus says that this sickness is not unto death and yet, Lazarus, at this point, is already dead. Now no one else knew it, but Jesus did. So why did He say that? Because through raising Lazarus from the dead God will be glorified, both God the Father and God the Son!

Sometimes in our lives we see things that seem dead, lifeless and we wonder what God is doing. He has a plan, He has a purpose, and He has the perfect timing so that when He does work, we don't get the glory, but God does!

Never forget the words of the Lord in Jeremiah 29:11 where He says, **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”**

Now, how do I know that Lazarus was already dead? Think about it. It was a one day's journey from Bethany to Bethabara. Jesus is going to remain there 2 days before He begins His journey to Bethany. And then it will take Him another day to get there. Thus, as we will see, by the time Jesus reaches Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days!

Now you may be thinking why four days, why not two or even three? Jesus deliberately waited to bring Lazarus back from the dead until he had been in the tomb four days.

Listen carefully to why the four days. We are told, “Lightfoot quotes a remarkable tradition of Ben Kaphra: ‘Grief reaches its height on the third day. For three days the spirit hovers about the tomb, if perchance it may return to the body. But when it sees the fashion of the countenance changed, it retires and abandons the body.’” (Dods)

So, on day four the body has been corrupted, there is no more hope, at least with the traditions that they believed. I am not saying that they were right on this, but it is what they believed.

Now, look at verse 5 again and it says that Jesus **“loved”** Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Now here's the thing. Jesus didn't love them with just a brotherly type of love, a PHILEO love, but with an AGAPAO or an AGAPE love, an unconditional love!

I think many times we do as Mary and Martha did. We see our weaknesses and think that God's love is conditional towards us, a brotherly type of love. When in reality, it is an unconditional love. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more nor is there anything you can do to make God love you less!

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:8, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

VERSES 7-10

So, Jesus spends two days and then He tells His men that it is time to go to Judea. You see, Jesus was not in a hurry, He was in total control of the situation, and yet, when you look at it from our perspective, it does seem too late!

What's the point? Wait upon the Lord and you can then rest in Him instead of bearing the burden yourself. Worry doesn't help the situation but it does move us away from resting in Him. It is as Isaiah 40:31 says, **“But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”**

So, Jesus tells His men, *“Let's go to Judea!”* And they tell Him, *“Are You kidding me? They want to kill You! They have tried before; do You want them to try again?”*

Remember in the last chapter the Jewish religious leaders wanted to stone Jesus to death because He claimed to be God. And He is but they refused to accept that fact.

And now Jesus wants to go back to Jerusalem where they want to kill Him! You can see why the disciples were worried.

Let me say this, you can be in the most dangerous part of the world, in the will of God, and it will be the safest place in the world.

But, you can also be in a rubber room and out of the will of God and it will be the most dangerous place in the world for you.

As you walk in the will of God you don't have to worry about dying before the appointed time that God has for you.

Thus, we are going to see that Jesus is not worried, He knows the time the Father has allotted for Him and He will work, as dangerous as it may be, because the night is coming, the cross of Calvary is close, when the work will be finished.

It is as Alford wrote, "I have a fixed time during which to work, appointed me by my Father; during that time I feel no danger, I walk in His light, even as the traveler in the light of this world by day."

VERSES 11-15

We are told here that Jesus tells His men that Lazarus is asleep and that He is going to him to wake him up! What is that about?

First of all, when a sinner dies in his sins he is separated from God for eternity.

But, a person who is born again, saved, does not die but goes to sleep, as the Bible puts it. Now we are not talking about soul sleep here. Jesus is speaking of the body, in a sense, goes to sleep, but it will be resurrected one day, at the Rapture!

You see, this body is just a temporary dwelling place for our soul and spirits to dwell in. Thus, the moment this body ceases to function, when our brain waves are flat-lined, we are with the Lord.

Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 5:6-8, **“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”**

And in Philippians 1:21-24 Paul tells us, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”**

You see, we don't really die, we just move from this tent to the mansion, a new body that will never get sick or die, and we will be with the Lord for eternity!

That is what Jesus is speaking of here. You see, Jesus tells us what is going on with Lazarus, He knew that, **“Lazarus is dead.”** And notice it is in the past tense because he has been dead for three days already!

Now by the time Jesus makes it to Bethany he will be dead for four days, for it is a day's journey to Bethany.

And as you read verse 15 here in John 11 please understand that Jesus is not glad that Lazarus is dead but that by seeing Him raise Lazarus from the dead, that their faith would grow!

I think we see that in our own lives as we see the hand of God move upon our lives. Our faith grows!

VERSE 16

First of all, is he called Thomas or Didymus? Both! Let me explain. “All Jews in those days had two names – one a Hebrew name by which a man was known in his own circle, the other a Greek name by which he was known in a wider circle. *Thomas* is the *Hebrew* and *Didymus* the *Greek* for a *twin*.” (Barclay)

Now you can look at the remarks of Thomas two ways. First, he was willing to die for the Lord, he was a true disciple. I don’t think that is what is going on here.

I think Thomas was a fatalist, “Well, if He goes they will kill Him, so we might as well go with Him and die with Him!” Do you know what this syndrome is called?

It is called the Eyore syndrome! No, not really, I just made that up but it does fit the picture.

You know Eyore from Winnie the Pooh right? The doom and gloom donkey who said things like, “It’s not much of a tail, but I’m sort of attached to it.”

Or, when Winnie the Pooh asked, “Lovely day, isn’t it?” And Eeyore responds in true Eeyore fashion: open with something affirmative and then bring in the punch line for a slam dunk. “If it is a good morning, which I doubt.”

We should not be gloom and doom but the joy of the Lord should fill our lives and really, overflow our lives and touch the lives of others. There is joy in the **LORD!**

That is how people should see us, not people of discouragement but encouragement. Not faithless people but faithful people! And the idea here is that it does not matter the situation, our hope is in the Lord, our joy is in the Lord, and our faith is in the Lord!

Are you willing to walk by faith? You should be able to!

VERSES 17-22

Remember that Jesus waited four days before He arrived at Bethany. He knew of the Jewish superstition of that day that said the soul stayed near the grave for three days, hoping to return to the body. But when the fourth day came around, corruption began and there was no more hope of resuscitation, of life! So, at this point there is really no more hope.

Now in verse 19 we are told that “**. . . many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.**”

Keep in mind that the day a person died, they would bury them. And, according to Edersheim, the mourning began immediately.

The first three days were the most intense mourning and many times they would hire professional mourners.

The rest of that week the mourning was less intense and friends would come by to offer their condolences. So, the fourth day was really the first day Jesus could have come.

I remember when I was in grade school, I had a Jewish teacher whose parent died and we went to her home to comfort her with a basket of fruit, and all around her were family and friends.

They would do this, for the most part, just like they did it during the time of Jesus. That is what we are seeing here, I don't know if anyone brought fruit like I did, but they did come by with comfort for the family.

Now, in verse 20 we see that Martha is made aware that Jesus is near-by and she broke protocol by leaving her home to find Jesus while Mary sat in the home contemplating all that had taken place.

And then we see Martha's disappointment in the late arrival by Jesus and even maybe a little rebuke. She said, "**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.**"

Do we ever feel that way in situations that we face? I bet we do. It may not be the death of a loved one, but death to any situation we are in, it just doesn't work out like we thought and we say, "Lord, where were You? If you only had been here this would have never happened!"

In other words, we are blaming God but God is not at fault and you do not know what He is going to do in the situation you find yourself in. Martha is going to find out just as we do many times! Martha had faith for the future but not for the present. May we look at the promises of God as not only some future reality, but also for the present circumstances we face!

Now Martha has not given up on Jesus but she is not confident that He can raise her brother from the dead because in verse 39, when Jesus tells them to roll the stone away from the door of the tomb, Martha says, "**Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.**"

And Martha closes with these words, not too hopeful, but she says to Jesus, "**But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.**" As great as that sounds, she did not believe!

VERSES 23-27

Notice this interaction between Jesus and Martha. Jesus tells her that her brother will rise again and her response is a theological one. "**I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**"

Yes, that is true but Jesus is not speaking theologically here about some future event, but Lazarus will rise again, now! Spurgeon wrote this regarding what Martha said, “It is clear that she derived very little consolation from the fact of a distant and general resurrection: she needed resurrection and life to come nearer home, and to become more a present fact to her.”

I wonder how often we do that? The Lord speaks to our heart about something as you read His Word and you just can’t believe it is true, that it is for today, that Jesus is speaking to you. Just as He was speaking to Martha, He speaks to us, don’t close Him out or negate what He wants to do.

And in all of Martha’s doubting notice what Jesus tells her. He said, “**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And who lives and believes in Me shall never die. . . .**”

This is the fifth of seven great “***I AM***” statements made by Jesus in this Gospel. In the Greek, it is the ***EGO EIMI!***

Look at these “***I AM***” statements made by Jesus here in John.

First, “**I AM the Bread of Life**” (6:35). Jesus tells us here that He is the spiritual food that we need. He relates Himself to bread to indicate that we must consume His teaching and His lifestyle if we are truly His disciples.

Secondly, “**I AM the Light of the World**” (8:12). Jesus is the only true Light and accepting Him and following Him removes the darkness, such as sin and death, out of our lives. The light of Jesus represents His purity and His holiness.

Next, the third “**I AM**” statement made by Jesus, He says, “**I AM the Door**” (10:7). Jesus is telling us here that He is the entrance – the entrance into a relationship with God the Father – ***THE ONLY ENTRANCE!***

Fourthly, Jesus says, **“I AM the Good Shepherd”** (10:11,14). In the Old Testament books such as Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, we see God rebuking wicked shepherds. Jesus tells us here that He is the good Shepherd. A shepherd leads, feeds, and protects his flock, and that’s exactly what Jesus does to those who believe in Him and trust on Him.

Fifthly, Jesus said, **“I AM the Resurrection and the Life”** (11:25) Jesus is not telling us that we will avoid a physical death, But rather He is promising us that He is the gateway to an everlasting life and fellowship with God in heaven.

The sixth “I AM” statement by Jesus is this, where Jesus said, **“I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life”** (14:6). Jesus concluded this “I AM” saying by stating that no one can come to His Father, but by Him. Jesus is the way to the eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before the beginning of time. (Titus 1:2) Jesus is the way because He is the truth, and He is the truth because He is the way. As God incarnate, He is life for all who believe in Him and accept His salvation to eternal life.

Finally, the seventh “I AM” statement, Jesus said **“I AM the True Vine”** (15:1). This means that we are connected to Him and if we obey His commandments, we will bear fruit on our branches, fruit that will ultimately belong to the vine.

Powerful statements showing that Jesus is Almighty God!

Now here in John 10:25, where Jesus said that, **“I am the resurrection and the life”** this is dealing with something every one of us will face one day – **DEATH!** And make no mistake about it, death is something that many people fear. They don’t want to die so they do everything possible to keep on living.

But think about that. How many people have succeeded in doing that? None! We age, we get older, our body wears out, and in the end, you know what happens, you still die!

Regarding immortality, Woody Allen once said, “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.”

For the believer, he doesn’t die, he just moves his residence from these bodies of flesh on the earth to a new body in heaven with the Lord.

Now here is the challenge that Jesus gives to Martha and to all of us, “**Do you believe this?**”

Notice that Jesus challenges Martha to believe what He has said, not to debate it or argue about it or rationalize it in her head, but believe. And He does the same with us today.

And listen again to what Martha says. She said, “**. . . ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’**”

Martha makes three great statements. That Jesus is the Messiah. That He is God. And lastly, that He stands before her in this world. Remarkable statements by this woman, while His apostles had a hard time with these things.

VERSES 28-32

We are told that Martha called Mary “**secretly**” because of the danger involved. What I mean by that is they knew that the Jewish leaders were out to arrest Jesus so Martha did not want everyone to know that Jesus was there.

So as Martha tells her sister, Mary, that Jesus is coming, Mary runs out to meet Him and the mourners in the house think she is going to the tomb to wail over the death of her brother Lazarus.

You see, it was the fourth day and the body of her brother, Lazarus was decaying and there was no hope that he would be revived. What else was she going to do? But Mary is not running to the tomb, but to see Jesus!

And when Mary meets Jesus she falls down on her feet and she worshiped Jesus. That is interesting because of all the pain, the sorrow she was feeling at this time, it did not take her away from worshiping the Lord!

And then Mary said these words to Jesus, “**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.**” These words that she spoke were very similar to Martha’s.

Now we don’t know how she spoke these words and thus, did she also rebuke Jesus for His tardiness? Again, we don’t know. It may be that Mary just spoke with words of affirmation, we are not sure, but I tend to lean towards that because of her posture of worship towards Jesus.

The other thing is that Jesus did not rebuke her or correct her. So, again, I think these are words of affirmation, that she truly believed that if Jesus would have gotten there sooner, her brother would be alive!

Look at how Jesus responded to what Mary had said.

VERSES 33-38

Here we see the compassion of Jesus towards us. It says that He “**groaned in the spirit.**” And when it says that Jesus “**groaned in the spirit**” it literally means “to snort like a horse.”

Why was He filled with so much anger and indignation that it made Him snort? It wasn’t over the death of Lazarus because He was going to raise him from the dead.

I believe it was over the devastating effects that sin has upon people, the consequences of sin and thus, He wept.

Now when Mary and Martha wept it was a loud wailing but for Jesus, tears flowed down His face as He quietly wept for all that sin had done upon the lives of the people.

On this Morris tells us regarding Jesus weeping, “That used here (and here only in the New Testament) points rather to a quiet weeping. Jesus did not wail loudly but He was deeply grieved.”

You see, there is an important contrast between the tears of Mary in John 11:33 and the tears of Jesus spoken of in John 11:35.

When Mary wept it was a loud wailing. When Jesus wept it was a quiet weeping. He understood what He was going to do, but, like I have said, He is broken over what sin has done in this world. Death is something that all of us face!

In comparing Mary and Jesus Barclay points this out for us as he wrote, “We must remember that this would be no gentle shedding of tears. It would be almost hysterical wailing and shrieking, for it was the Jewish point of view that the more unrestrained the weeping, the honour it paid to the dead.”

Now when the people saw Jesus weep, the tears flow down His face, they said, “**See how He loved him!**” For these Jews, in their minds, they too saw the arrival of Jesus as being too late. In other words, “*Too bad, now there is nothing that He can do! If He had only come sooner!*”

Make no mistake about it, the timing of Jesus is never too late, but it is perfect!

Now I can honestly say, I don’t always understand this. I think many times that the Lord should respond sooner, that He should do this or do that. And my problem is that I can only see what is before me while the Lord sees everything. He knows what is going to happen before it happens and thus, He knows what is best for our lives!

In Ecclesiastes 3:11 Solomon tells us, **“He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”**

You see, life apart from God is empty, it is futile, there is no real meaning to it. But once you place God back into your life you find the meaning, you find that abundant life! And God takes the things we go through and He makes them beautiful in *“its time”* or *“His time”* not our time!

I think this fits in with what Paul said in Romans 8:28, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”**

I may not see how something is going to work out for good. I may not feel how something is going to work out for good. But I can *“know”* that whatever I am going through will work out for good because I am the Lord’s and I trust His Word in the situation I am facing!

Also, I don’t care who you are, God has also placed in all of us the knowledge of Him, that there is a God. Now we can suppress that truth, we can try to block it from our lives, but it is there and the issue here is that we will never be complete until He fills that void in us.

Thus, as we come to Him and view the things we see with eternity as a back drop we will be able to enjoy the fruits of our labor for we once again have a correct perspective of things.

And even though we may not know all the details of our life, God will begin to reveal them to us one step at a time. Yes, He makes all things beautiful in His time!

So now Jesus comes to the tomb where the body of Lazarus has been placed. The body of Lazarus has been there for four days now and listen to what happens next!

VERSES 39-40

Keep in mind, even to this day they don't embalm the dead but they burry them the same day that they die, as is the case here.

And I love what John says here. Lazarus has been in this tomb for four days now and I like the way that the King James Version puts Martha's remarks. It says "**Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.**"

That is just obvious! I bet it would have stinketh, being in the tomb for four days in that part of the world, even in a tomb.

And I think Martha is questioning the Lord, not truly believing in His Words when He said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?**"

Now notice what Jesus does.

He says to Martha, "**Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?**"

What was Jesus doing? Jesus is trying to draw Martha's faith out here, "Martha, don't you remember what I told you?"

And our gracious Lord does the same with us, reminding us of what He has told us, even though the situation we are going through may seem hopeless and stinketh!

Also, in Jesus telling them to roll away the stone that covered the tomb, He was allowing them to be involved in this work. Now does God need anyone to help Him raise Lazarus from the dead? Not at all! And like I have said, He is allowing them to be part of the work of God by rolling away the stone.

The same is true for us, God wants to use us. He used a donkey in the Old Testament to speak for Him, so He doesn't need us, but if we are willing to be used by Him, to believe, we can be part of the work.

Notice what we are told in II Chronicles 16:9, **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . .”**

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

And lastly, in II Corinthians 6:1 Paul says, **“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”**

He is looking for people who are willing to take those steps of faith and be used by Him. Where is your heart?

What I like here is that they were willing to be part of the work. How do I know? Let's read on and see!

VERSES 41-42

They stepped out in faith and rolled the stone away. And I'm sure at this point, the smell was not pretty.

But even in the middle of this stink, this mess, we see Jesus in communion with the Father.

May we not let life's circumstances, the stench of death that may be around us, keep us from communion with the Father.

Not only that but as Jesus spoke to the Father, He did so loudly so the people could hear Him. Why did He do that?

So that when Lazarus does come forth, they will believe that Jesus is from the Father! They smelled the smell of death and now they are going to see the miracle of life!

May we display our faith openly, take those steps of faith loudly so when God brings forth the miracle, others will see it and come to faith in Christ!

Look at what happens next!

VERSES 43-44

Jesus said for Lazarus to come forth and he did. It is as Morris tells us, “The loud voice was not, of course, because a loud voice was needed to make the dead hear. Probably it was in part at least, so that the crowd could know that this was no work of magic, but the very power of God. Wizards mutter their incantations and spells (*cf.* Isaiah 8:19). Not so the Son of God.”

And as Jesus speaks forth these words He speaks to Lazarus as if he were alive, why? As Paul said in Romans 4:17, “**. . . God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.**” You see, He can bring to life the dead and thus, as He called, Lazarus came forth!

Now please understand that this was not a resurrection because Lazarus is going to die again, but it was a resuscitation! One day we will be raised in glory, as Jesus was, when we get our resurrection bodies at the time of the Rapture. That day is coming!

Now that is what God is doing today. He raises the dead, in a sense. Yes, some He raises physically and they will die again like Lazarus. But more importantly, He raises those who are spiritually dead back to life as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1, “**And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.**”

And as Lazarus comes forward notice what Jesus tells those around him to do, “**Loosen him, and let him go.**”

You see, he was still wrapped in the grave clothes that had him bound, unable to walk freely.

And God allows us to do the same with those who have been spiritually raised from the dead, to help them get those grave clothes off, those things that are used for the dead and give to them the life that is found in Jesus through His Word.

How did the people respond to what they just saw, Lazarus being raised from the dead? Let's read on and we will see.

VERSES 45-48

As we can see, John continues his persistent theme – that the words and works of Jesus divide humanity between those who believe and those who reject. And that is still the case today, never forget that. There will be the opposition and then there will also be those who receive that gift of life that is found in Jesus!

But think about this. How could you not believe?

But some didn't, they were more interested in their standing with the religious leaders, who were part of the walking dead, than they were with God.

Therefore, they go and tell these religious leaders that Jesus is back in town and what He just did, raising Lazarus from the dead, so they could arrest Jesus and put Him to death!

And they have this meeting, even though it was unofficial. Trench puts it like this, “It was a meeting of the Sanhedrin. John’s authority for the account of what passed here would be Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus or some other member of the Sanhedrin who later became a Christian.”

And as you read this you can clearly see what they are concerned about, ***THEMSELVES!*** People are no different today; they reject Jesus because they don’t want to lose their positions, their friends, and their social status, whatever.

That was their problem, they thought if they let Jesus continue on their position and their nation would be taken away. The reality is, by their rejection of Jesus that is what will happen!

By 70 A. D. the Romans came in and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, the Temple was burned to the ground, it was destroyed and millions of Jews died at the hands of the Romans!

It was not because of what Jesus had done but it was because of their rejection of Him!

F. B. Meyer put it this way, “Christianity endangers businesses, undermines profitable but wicked trades, steals away customers from the devil’s shrines, attacks vested interests, and turns the world upside down. It is a tiresome, annoying, profit-destroying thing.”

That is the way these religious leaders saw it.

Also, listen to what Ryle said regarding what these men saw, the miracles that Jesus did. He wrote, “This is a marvelous admission. Even our Lord’s worst enemies confess that our Lord did miracles, and many miracles. Can we doubt that they would have denied the truth of His miracles, if they could? But they do not seem to have attempted it. They were too many, too public, and too thoroughly witnessed for them to dare to deny them. How, in the face of this fact, modern infidels and skeptics can talk of our Lord’s miracles as being impostures and delusions, they would do well to explain! If the Pharisees who lived in our Lord’s time, and who moved heaven and earth to oppose His progress, never dared to dispute the fact that He worked miracles, it is absurd to begin denying His miracles now, after eighteen centuries have passed away.”

How very true that is and yet people continue to deny the work of Jesus, trying to negate the miracles He has done. That is just foolish!

Remember the words that Jesus said to Martha, “**... ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’**” John 11:25-26. That is a question that we all must answer “**Do you believe this?**”

VERSES 49-52

Please note that this prophecy of Caiaphas was not given because he was such a godly man, but because of his position as High Priest.

And what Caiaphas said is basically this, “***You fools! If you had any intelligence at all, you would see that the answer is very simple. It is better that one die rather than a whole nation!***”

It is as Isaiah 53 tells us, that the Messiah would die for the sins of the nation and the world!

John tells us that Jesus is going to bring not only the nation of Israel together, but both Jew and Gentile into one body and that is exactly what He did do.

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 2:13-18, **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”**

So, this division between Jesus and the religious leaders is growing. Look at what John tells us next!

VERSES 53-54

The Jewish religious council has decided that this man, Jesus, needs to be put to death. Maclaren expressed the thinking of the council: “Never mind about His miracles, or His teaching, or the beauty of His character. His life is a perpetual danger to our prerogatives [rights]. I vote for death!”

Thus, Jesus walked cautiously so that they would not put Him to death, at least not until the time the Father had proclaimed. Thus, He withdrew to the area of Ephraim, which is about 15 miles to the north of Bethany and He will stay there until the appointed time of His arrival in Jerusalem.

Why did He do this? Because, like I have said, there was a specific day He would ride through Jerusalem as Messiah the Prince and die for the sins of the world! He was in control of the situation, they were not!

VERSES 55-57

This means that it was the last few days before the coming Passover – at which Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, and crucified.

Josephus tells us there were at least 250,000 sheep that were slaughtered in the Temple during the Passover of the time of Jesus. And with one sheep per 10 people, that would mean Jerusalem swelled to well over 2.5 million people during this feast! All those lambs and among them, the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world, Jesus!

Now word is out, Jesus is on their hit list, and you might say that His picture is hanging in the local post office so that if anyone sees Him, they need to report it to the religious leaders so they could arrest Him!

Do you know the biggest opposition to the church today? No, it is not Islam! No, it is not the humanists! No, it is not those who deny there is a God! No, it is not the politicians! It is the church itself, fighting against those who are standing up for God! It is the religious people who have a form of godliness but deny its power.

We say that Jesus is the only way, they say He is one of the many ways. We say the Bible is the Word of God, they say it contains the Words of God. And the list goes on-and-on.

We need to stand strong in the Lord and not water down His Word. Jude said, **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”** Jude 3.

You see, we know the end of the story and the ungodly don't win. Thus, let's gather as many on our side, into the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ as we can!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 9:37-38, **“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”** And we read that and we pray, “Yes Lord, send in those who will labor.”

But that is not all that Jesus is talking about, for as you continue on in Matthew, Jesus first prays for the laborers and then He told His men to go out into the fields and you know what, that is exactly what He is telling us. To pray for laborers and then you go out and do the work! Go forth and minister the things of God!

And remember, God's timing is perfect and the solution to your problem is not going to be found in something but someone, as we have seen this evening. The solution to our problem is Jesus and it will be accomplished in His perfect timing! May we be able to rest in that truth!

As we continue on in our study next time, remember that the Passover is a week away, and this is the Passover where our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ will die for our sins and the sins of the world!

Remember what Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”** John 3:16-21.

God’s love for sinful man! Don’t reject it but receive it by faith!