

# EXPLANATION OF 43<sup>RD</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## JOHN 11 (A.D. 70-95)

### INTRODUCTION

John 10:40 – 11:57 describes the ministry of Jesus Christ in Perea<sup>1</sup> and Bethany (from December A.D. 29 to about February A.D. 30, three months).

In John 11:1-44 Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a greater miracle-sign than all the other miracle-signs and proved that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah.

- The miracle of multiplying the bread was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life (6:35).
- The miracle of healing the man born blind was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Light of the world (8:12).
- The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was a sign of Jesus Christ as the Resurrection and the Life (11:25).

This miracle led directly to the formal decision of the Jewish Council to kill Jesus Christ (11:47-55).

### OUTLINE

#### (I) 10:40-42. The ministry of Jesus outside Israel.

(II) 11:1-7. Jesus receives a message that Lazarus is sick.

(III) 11:8-10. Walk by day and not by night.

(IV) 11:11-16. Physical death.

a. The spirit (soul) of dead people do not roam around the house or the grave.

b. The spirit (soul) of a dead person is unaware of events taking place on earth.

c. The spirit (soul) of a dead person is very conscious of heaven or hell.

d. Thomas.

(V) 11:17-27. Jesus speaks to Martha.

a. Martha did not have the right picture about Jesus Christ (11:17-24).

b. Jesus is the resurrection and the life (11:25-26).

c. Martha believes (11:27).

(VI) 11:28-32. Jesus speaks to Mary.

(VII) 11:33-44. Jesus raises Lazarus from death.

(VIII) 11:45-57. The miraculous sign of Jesus had an effect in four directions.

a. First effect: many Jews, who were previously hostile towards Jesus, began to put their faith in him (11:45).

b. Second effect: the bitter enemies of Jesus devised a plot to kill Jesus (11:46-48).

c. The prophecy of Caiaphas (11:49-52).

d. Jesus withdrew to the desert (11:53-54).

e. Third effect: the many people who came to the Jewish Passover Feast kept expectantly looking for Jesus (11:55-57).

f. Fourth effect: the faith of the disciples was strengthened.

### EXPLANATION

#### (I) 10:40-42. The ministry of Jesus outside Israel.

**10:40.** And again he (Jesus) went back (viaa) to the other side of<sup>2</sup> the Jordan to the place where John at first was (viia+) baptising (+vppa), and he stayed (viaa).

**10:41.** And many (people) came (viaa) to him and kept saying (viia) “John did (viaa) no miraculous sign, but everything John said (viaa) about this man was (viia) true.”

**10:42** And many believed (viaa) in him there.

Jesus went across the River Jordan to the place where John the Baptist had been baptising in the early days, that is, to Bethany across the Jordan (1:28). Many people there remembered what John had said about Jesus Christ (1:19-36; 3:22-36; 5:33), saw Jesus’ miraculous signs and began to believe in him. The word ‘to believe’ is in the past (aorist) tense and does not necessarily mean that these people believed in him continually and persistently (cf. 8:30).

#### (II) 11:1-7. Jesus receives a message that Lazarus is sick.

**11:1.** A certain person was (viia) sick, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and Martha her sister.

**11:2.** Now it was (viia) the Mary who anointed (vpaa) the Lord with ointment and wiped (vpaa) his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick (viia).

**11:3.** The sisters therefore sent (viaa) to him saying (vppa) “Lord, listen! The one whom you love (vipa) is sick (vipa).”

**11:4.** But when Jesus heard (vpaa) (it) he said (viaa), “This sickness is (vipa) not unto death; on the contrary, it (is) for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified (vsap) by this (event).”

**11:5.** Now Jesus was holding in loving esteem (viia) Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

**11:6.** So when he heard (viaa) that he was sick (vipa), he then first<sup>3</sup> stayed (viaa) in the place where he was (viia) two days.

**11:7.** Then<sup>4</sup> after this he said (vipa) to his disciples, “Let us go (vspa) to Judea again.”

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 13:22 – 19:27

<sup>2</sup> G: peran. The other side of

<sup>3</sup> G: tote

<sup>4</sup> G: epeite

Bethany in Judea was located about three kilometres (15 stadia) from Jerusalem (11:18) and was called ‘the village of Mary and her sister Martha’ (11:1) to distinguish it from Bethany in Perea, where John the Baptist had baptised people (1:19). ‘Lazarus’ is a short form of the name Eleazar (meaning: ‘my God helps’) and is called ‘the brother of Mary’ to distinguish him from the beggar Lazarus<sup>5</sup>. Although the order of the names ‘Martha and Mary’ (10:19; 11:5,19)<sup>6</sup> shows that Martha was probably the older, Mary is mentioned first due to her close relationship to Jesus. Mary is called ‘Mary who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair’ (11:2; cf. 12:1-8)<sup>7</sup> to distinguish her from many other Mary’s in the New Testament.

Lazarus became sick and got worse by the day. Martha and Mary wished that Jesus were with them (11:21,32) and sent messengers to Jesus. The journey to Perea took about two or three days. When Jesus heard the message, he said that this sickness would not end in death, but served to bring glory to God and the Son of God (cf. 5:23; 9:3). The words ‘glory’ and ‘to glorify’ point to the revelation of God’s attributes and presence. Jesus already knew what was going to happen before it happened! In order for his glory to shine the brightest, Lazarus first had to die. Lazarus probably died before the messengers arrived back at Martha and Mary. The sisters could not grasp the message of Jesus that the sickness of Lazarus would not end in death, but did not forget it (11:22). Jesus’ *continual* love for Martha, Mary and Lazarus was not the romantic type of love, but the self-sacrificial kind of love (11:36; 13:34-35)<sup>8</sup>.

But Jesus did not accompany the messengers. He stayed another two days in Perea. He wanted Lazarus to be dead for a few days before he arrived in Bethany, so that the miracle might be even greater and God would be glorified even more. His reaction seems cruel, but serves a greater purpose: to glorify God and to strengthen the faith of his followers (11:15). God’s ways of doing things are very different than ours<sup>9</sup>, but in the end they are for the best of those who believe in him<sup>10</sup>!

### (III) 11:8-10. Walk by day and not by night.

**11:8.** The disciples said (vipa) to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking (via) to stone (vnaa) you, and are you going (vipa present tense) there again?”

**11:9.** Jesus answered (viao). “Are (vipa) there not twelve hours in the day (i.e. the time between the rising and the setting of the sun)? If anyone walks (vspa) during day-time, he does not stumble (vipa), because he sees (vipa) the world’s light.

**11:10.** But if anyone walks (vspa) during the night, he stumbles (vipa), because the light is not in him.”

The Jews divided the daytime in twelve equal parts, so that the hours during the summer were longer than the hours during the winter. These words of Jesus do not have a literal meaning (cf. 2:19; 3:3; 4:10; 6:52; 11:11). Jesus did not mean to say that they had to travel during the day and hide during the night from their enemies. He intended to say that *just as every daytime has a fixed period of time during which there is light (twelve hours), so God has ordained a fixed period of time for the life (and ministry) of Jesus Christ and for everyone else! No one and nothing can shorten or lengthen this time!* A man must walk while there is light. Jesus meant that God has given him a definite allotted time to do his work on earth and to finish his work. That time cannot be lengthened by any measure the disciples like to take, nor can it be shortened by any plot of his enemies. *God is sovereign and the time he allots to every person cannot be changed by the circumstances of that person on earth!* If we continue to walk in the light of God’s plan for our lives, we need not fear anyone or anything! Everything will happen exactly as God planned things to happen! We will not suffer any real injury and we will not fail! It is a wonderful assurance to know that God is on the throne of the universe and that he controls every person and circumstance!

Jesus Christ knew exactly what God’s plan was for him and his ministry. That is why he did not fear his enemies in Judea. But his disciples were not looking at God or God’s sovereign plan. They were only focussing on the visible circumstances of their life: the threat of enemies who were seeking to stone them.

### (IV) 11:11-16. Physical death.

**11:11.** These things he spoke (viaa), and after this he said (vipa) them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep (virn); but I am going (vipn) in order to wake him up (vsaa).”

**11:12.** The disciples said (viaa) to him, ““Lord, if he has fallen asleep (virn), he will recover (get healed)(vifp).”

**11:13.** But Jesus had been speaking (vila) about his death; they however thought (viaa) that he was speaking (vipa) about the repose of sleep (the sleep of slumber)<sup>11</sup> (Genitive of description).

**11:14.** At that time then Jesus said (viaa) to them plainly, “Lazarus has died (viaa),

**11:15.** and for your sake I am glad (vipa) I was (viim) not there, so that you may believe (vsaa). But let us go (vspa) to him.”

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 16:20

<sup>6</sup> Luke 10:38,39

<sup>7</sup> Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13

<sup>8</sup> G: agapé. cf. Mark 12:30-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>11</sup> G: hé koimésis tou hupnou. The sleep of slumber

**11:16.** Then Thomas, called (vppp) Didymus, said (viaa) to the rest of his disciples, “Let us also go (vspa), that we may die (vsaa) with him.”

The disciples thought that Jesus talked about sleeping, while Jesus meant that Lazarus had died. Although both the Old Testament<sup>12</sup> and the New Testament<sup>13</sup> speak about physical death as ‘sleeping’, the disciples interpreted the words of Jesus literally. They thought that Lazarus was recovering from his sickness and was resting. But Jesus told them straight that Lazarus had died and that this happened to strengthen their faith. If Lazarus had only been sick, Jesus would have healed him. Raising a person from the dead is a much greater miracle and would strengthen their faith much more. Jesus was not speaking of them coming to faith for the first time, but of causing their faith in him to grow.

The Bible does not teach that the spirit (soul) of a dead person is sleeping during the period between physical death and physical resurrection.

**a. The spirit (soul) of dead people do not roam around the house or the grave.**

That is why Christians do NOT fear or worship any spirits of dead people in their homes, at the graves, in temples or anywhere else. The Bible teaches that after death, the spirits of dead people immediately go to heaven or to hell<sup>14</sup>.

**b. The spirit (soul) of a dead person is unaware of events taking place on earth.**

Although death is compared to sleeping, the Bible does not teach that the spirit of the dead person is sleeping in the sense that he is in a state of total unconsciousness. The spirit is unconscious only with respect to this world, which it has left. The spirit of a dead person will never come to his house again<sup>15</sup>. The spirit of a dead person, like Abraham and Jacob, cannot see or know any other people still living on earth<sup>16</sup>. The spirit of a dead person knows nothing about the events on earth and will never again have a part in anything that happens on this present earth<sup>17</sup>. The spirit of a dead person knows nothing about his own family on earth and cannot communicate with anyone still living on earth<sup>18</sup>. The spirit of a dead person cannot plan or work or have any influence on the people still on earth. The event described in 1 Samuel 28 is a counterfeit imitation of an evil spirit<sup>19</sup>.

**c. The spirit (soul) of a dead person is very conscious of heaven or hell.**

The spirit of a dead person is not asleep, but fully awake or aware of their eternal condition of suffering in hell or comfort in heaven<sup>20</sup>. The spirit of a believer in Christ is very conscious (awake, aware) with respect to all the persons in heaven (God, Christ, Abraham)<sup>21</sup>. He lives in the presence of God, speaks with God, worships and serves God<sup>22</sup>.

**d. Thomas.**

Thomas called Didymus (which means ‘twin’) seems to have been a disciple who easily got discouraged and doubted. He expected that the bad things would happen (11:16) and did not believe that good things could happen (20:24-29). He did not mean that he expected that the disciples would die with Lazarus, but that they would die with Christ<sup>23</sup>.

**(IV) 11:17-27. Jesus speaks to Martha.**

**a. Martha did not have the right picture about Jesus Christ (11:17-24).**

**11:17.** So when Jesus came (vpaa) he found (viaa) that he (Lazarus) had already been (was)(vppa) in the tomb for four days.

**11:18.** Now Bethany was (viia) near Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia (about three kilometres) away

**11:19.** and many of the Jews had come (vila) to Martha and Mary in order to console (vsad) them with regard to the brother.

**11:20.** Now when Martha heard (viaa) that Jesus was coming (vipn), she went out to meet him (viaa), but Mary continued to sit (viin) in the house.

**11:21.** So Martha said (viaa) to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been<sup>24</sup> (viia) here<sup>25</sup>, my brother would not have died (viaa).

**11:22.** But even now I know (by relationship and reflection)<sup>26</sup> (vira) that whatever you may beg<sup>27</sup> (vsam) from God, God will *certainly* give (vifa) to you.”

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 47:30; 2 Samuel 7:12

<sup>13</sup> Mathew 27:52; Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 4:13

<sup>14</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22-23; Luke 23:46; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:23

<sup>15</sup> Job 7:9-10

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 63:16

<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiastes 9:6-10

<sup>18</sup> Luke 16:23-31

<sup>19</sup> cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14

<sup>20</sup> Luke 16:23-31

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 1:21-23

<sup>22</sup> Revelation 7:15-17; 20:4

<sup>23</sup> cf. Matthew 26:35

<sup>24</sup> G: é s imperfect of eimi

<sup>25</sup> G: hóde

<sup>26</sup> G: oida

<sup>27</sup> G: aiteó

**11:23.** Jesus said (vipa) to her, “Your brother will *certainly* rise (vifm) again.”

**11:24.** Martha said (vipa) to him, “I know (by relationship and reflection)<sup>28</sup> (vira) that he will rise again (vifm) in the resurrection on the last day.”

Many Jews (particularly from Jerusalem) had come to console Martha and Mary in the loss of their brother. Jesus knew that Lazarus had already been dead for four days, but someone told him this anyway (11:39). John mentions this fact to indicate the greatness of this miracle. The custom in those days was to bury the person the same day he died<sup>29</sup>. A rabbinic superstition says that the spirit (soul) of the deceased hovers three days around the dead body in the hope of getting reunited again; but departs when the body begins to decay. The Bible teaches the opposite, namely, that while the body remains on earth, the spirit (soul) departs immediately to heaven or hell<sup>30</sup>.

We do not know how Martha knew that Jesus was coming. It is possible that Jesus sent a message ahead to Martha, because he first wanted to speak to Martha alone. Martha was the doer (Luke 10:40-41) and went out to meet Jesus. Mary was the thinker (Luke 10:42) and stayed home. Martha and Mary both said that if Jesus had been in Bethany, Lazarus would not have died (11:21,32)! Like the disciples of Jesus, they thought that Jesus had to be present in order to perform a miracle of healing (cf. 4:47)<sup>31</sup>. They knew that Jesus was far away and that humanly speaking he could not have come to Bethany in time. They said this not to reproach Jesus, but because they were grieved.

Martha felt the struggle between her feelings of grief and her thoughts of hope. It was probably the words of Jesus passed on by the messenger that gave her hope: “This sickness will not end in death” (11:4). Her feelings said that her brother would remain dead, but her hope said that Jesus might still perform a miracle. The darkness of grief and the light of hope were engaged in a deadly combat. Martha did not have the right picture about God and Jesus Christ. The word ‘to ask’<sup>32</sup> is used when an inferior person asks something from a superior (4:9-10; 14:13; 15:7,16; 16:23-24,26). But when Jesus makes a request to God the Father the word ‘request’<sup>33</sup> is used and this word indicates the equality between the two persons (14:16; 17:9,15,20)!

Martha, like believers during the Old Testament period, believed that the bodies of individual believers would one day be resurrected from the dead<sup>34</sup> in a general resurrection of all the dead<sup>35</sup>. Martha was a disciple of Jesus and probably also knew his teaching about the general resurrection of all the dead (5:28-29).

#### **b. Jesus is the resurrection and the life (11:25-26).**

**11:25.** (The believer is pictured at death). Jesus said (viaa) to her, “I AM<sup>36</sup> (vipa) the resurrection and the life. He who believes (continually)(vppa) in me, even though he dies (i.e. his body dies and decays)(vsaa), he will *certainly* (vifm) live (i.e. his soul will be translated into Christ’s presence; he will possess eternal life in glory);

**11:26.** (The believer is pictured before death) and everyone who lives (spiritually; is born again)(vppa) and believes (vppa)(i.e. hendiadys: the one living by faith) will in no way (double negative) die (vsaa) forever (i.e. shall never, never die; his spirit and body shall never ever be cast into hell; his soul and body shall never be separated from God’s presence and love). Do you believe (vipa) this?”

**The fifth ‘I AM’ statement of Jesus Christ** (cf. 6:35; 8:12; 10:9; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:5). In these statements the subjects and predicates are interchangeable. “I am the resurrection and the life” or “The resurrection and the life am I”. The being of Jesus is ‘life’ and it means that he possesses all the divine attributes (cf. 1:3-4). He himself is the Source of all life and the Cause of the resurrection from the dead and eternal life for all believers<sup>37</sup>. The spiritual resurrection, the physical resurrection and the eternal immortal life are rooted in Jesus Christ and indissolubly connected to Jesus Christ. Only because Christ himself was resurrected from the dead and lives forever, Christians will also be resurrected from the dead and live forever! The resurrection is mentioned first, because it opens the gate to immortal life. Only after Jesus was resurrected, he begins his own immortal life with respect to his human nature. And only after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, can Christians also share in his immortal life<sup>38</sup>. Without Jesus Christ there is only death in three senses: spiritual, physical and eternal. But through Jesus Christ there is life in three senses: spiritual, physical and eternal! Jesus is not just the resurrection and life at his second coming, but is now and always the resurrection and the life. It is this truth that Martha had not yet grasped.

**Jesus is the resurrection.** That is why everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will also live (spiritually), even when he dies (physically). Verse 25 views a believer in Jesus Christ at the moment of his physical death. Although his physical

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<sup>28</sup> G: oida

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 21:23; Acts 5:5,6,9,10

<sup>30</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:19-31

<sup>31</sup> Luke 7:1-10

<sup>32</sup> G: aiteó

<sup>33</sup> G: erotaó

<sup>34</sup> Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:16; 73:24-26

<sup>35</sup> Ezekiel 37:1-14; Hosea 6:2; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2

<sup>36</sup> G: egó eimi

<sup>37</sup> Romans 6:8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:20,44-57; Colossians 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:16

<sup>38</sup> Philippians 3:21

body must die and will die<sup>39</sup>, his spirit or soul will never die! It will live, that is, it will be translated (carried, transferred) into heaven in order to live eternally in the presence of Jesus Christ<sup>40</sup>.

His dead body experiences nothing, but his living spirit experiences eternal life in the presence of Christ! The Christian's mortal life in the body must come to an end, but his eternal life in the spirit endures forever. Physical death is the beginning of the perfect enjoyment of eternal life in heaven (11:4,15,26,40).

**Jesus is the life.** That is why everyone who believes in Jesus Christ not only lives now (has spiritual life), but will also live forever (will never die the eternal death). Verse 26 views a person during his life before his physical death. Although his physical body must die and will die, his spirit or soul *as well as his resurrected body* will never die the eternal death<sup>41</sup>. Because he lives (spiritually), that is, has eternal life (3:16; 6:47)<sup>42</sup>, he will never taste eternal death (hell). He will never be cast into the lake of burning sulphur<sup>43</sup>. His soul and body will never be separated from the presence and loving care of God<sup>44</sup>. The double negative in Greek<sup>45</sup> is the strongest possible negative: in no way! At Christ's second coming the believer's lowly mortal body (that has been lying in dust on earth) will certainly be resurrected (6:39-40) and transformed to be like Christ's glorious immortal body<sup>46</sup>. Then not only his spirit, but also his body will experience eternal life in the presence of Christ.

Unbelievers reject these words of Jesus and only believe in a temporary physical-empirical existence. But their rejection or denial of the spiritual reality does not mean that the eternal spiritual reality does not exist! The Bible clearly teaches that physical death is NOT the end of existence<sup>47</sup>!

Believers accept the words of Jesus. The miraculous sign of the resurrection of Lazarus is not only the proof that Jesus Christ has all power over life and death, but is at the same time an incentive for people to believe in Jesus Christ and to believe that he is indeed the resurrection and the life. The miraculous sign points to Jesus Christ. Jesus exhorts Martha to believe that a believer always conquers death in all three senses: spiritual, physical and eternal! A believer in Jesus Christ conquers spiritual death (5:24-25)<sup>48</sup>. He conquers the fear of physical death<sup>49</sup>. He will certainly conquer physical death (6:39-40)<sup>50</sup>. And he has already conquered eternal death (5:24; 10:28)<sup>51</sup>!

### c. Martha believes (11:27).

**11:27.** She said (vipa) to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe *with lasting effect* (vira) that you are (vipa) the Messiah (the Christ), the Son of God, the One coming (vppn) into the world."

As the disciples of Jesus Christ (6:69)<sup>52</sup>, Martha believed the claims of Jesus. The word 'to believe' (perfect tense) means that her faith was *continual and persistent* and *had become an unshakeable established conviction* in her! She believed that he is the Messiah (the Christ)(cf. 1:41; 10:24-25), the Son of God (cf. 1:1-18,49), the One that was to come to the world (1:9)<sup>53</sup>.

However, a little later Martha again doubted (that Jesus was the resurrection and life), because her eyes were focussed on the dead Lazarus in the tomb instead of on Jesus (11:39)<sup>54</sup>.

### (V) 11:28-32. Jesus speaks to Mary.

**11:28.** And when she had said (vpaa) this, she went back (viaa) and called (viaa) her sister secretly saying (vpaa), "The teacher is here (vipa) and is asking (vipa) for you."

**11:29.** She, when she heard (viaa) (it), hurriedly arose (viap) and was coming (viin) to him.

**11:30.** Now Jesus had not yet entered (vila) the village, but was (viia) still at the place where Martha had met (viaa) him.

**11:31.** So the Jews, who were (vppa) with her in the house and were consoling (vppn) her, noticed (vpaa) that Mary arose (viaa) and left (viaa), they followed (viaa) her, thinking (vpaa) that she was going (vipa) to the tomb in order to weep (vsaa) there.

<sup>39</sup> Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16

<sup>40</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1,8; Philipians 1:21-23; Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:4

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 10:28

<sup>42</sup> 1 John 5:11-12

<sup>43</sup> Revelation 21:8

<sup>44</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Romans 8:37-39

<sup>45</sup> G: ou mé

<sup>46</sup> Philipians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 9:27

<sup>48</sup> Ephesians 2:1,5

<sup>49</sup> Hebrews 2:15

<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:26

<sup>51</sup> Revelation 2:11

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 16:16

<sup>53</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philipians 2:5-8

<sup>54</sup> cf. Peter in Matthew 14:28-31

**11:32.** Then Mary, as<sup>55</sup> she arrived (viaa) at the place where Jesus was (viia), seeing (vpaa) him, she fell (viaa) at his feet and said (vppa), Lord, if you had been (viia) here, my brother would not have died (viaa).”

Jesus had not followed Martha, but was still at the place outside the village where Martha had met him. This place was probably close to the tomb of Lazarus, because the Jews at their home thought that Mary had gone to the tomb to mourn. The Jews had especially come to comfort Mary, because she seemed to be the more emotional of the two sisters. Jesus stayed close to the tomb, because he intended to perform the miraculous sign at the tomb in order that all people present would see it with their own eyes.

While Martha expressed faith when she said, “I know that even now God will give you whatever you beg” (11:22), Mary only wept (11:33). Earlier in Luke 10:38-42 and later in John 12:1-8 it was Mary who was more spiritual, but here in John 11:21-27 it was Martha who was more spiritual.

### **(VI) 11:33-44. Jesus raises Lazarus from death.**

**11:33.** So Jesus, when <sup>56</sup>he saw (viaa) her weeping<sup>57</sup> (vppa) and the Jews who had come along (vpaa) with her weeping (loud wailing)(vppa), was deeply moved (literally: snorting)(viad) in the spirit and was agitated (literally: visibly shaken)(viaa).

**11:34.** and he said (viaa), “Where have you laid (vira) him?” They said (vipa) to him, “Lord, come (vmpr) and see (vmaa) (imperatives).”

**11:35.** Jesus burst into tears<sup>58</sup> (viaa).

**11:36.** So the Jews were saying (viia), “See, how he *constantly* loved<sup>59</sup> (viia) him!”

**11:37.** But some of them said (viaa), “Could (viin) not he who opened (vpaa) the eyes of the blind man have done (vnaa) (a miraculous sign) so that also this man did not have to die (vsaa) (i.e. have kept this man from dying) ?”

**11:38.** So Jesus, again deeply moved (vppn) in himself, came (vipn) to the tomb. It was (viia) a cave and a stone was lying (viin) against it.

**11:39.** Jesus said (vipa), “Take away (vmaa)(imperative) the stone!” Martha, the sister of the deceased (the one who had come to the end) (vpra), said (vipa) to him, “He already smells (gives off a bad odour)(vipa), because it is the fourth day (since he died).

**11:40.** Jesus said (vipa) to her, “Did I not tell (viaa) you that if you believed (vsaa), you would *certainly* see (vifd) the glory of God?”

**11:41.** So they took away (viaa) the stone. Then Jesus lifted (viaa) his eyes up and said (viaa), “Father, I thank (vipa) you that you have heard (viaa) me.

**11:42.** I knew<sup>60</sup> (vila) that you *always* hear (vipa) me, but I said (viaa) this for the benefit of the crowd standing (vpra) (here), in order that they may *begin to believe* (ingressive aorist, present)(vsaa) that you sent (viaa) sent me.”

**11:43.** And having said (vpaa) these things, he shouted (viaa) with a loud voice “Lazarus, Here<sup>61</sup>! (Come) out<sup>62</sup>!”

**11:44.** Out came (viaa) the dead man (vpra), bound (vprp) hand and foot with grave-bands and his face was bound about (vilp) with a napkin. Jesus said (vipa) to them, “Untie (vmaa) him and let him go (vmaa)(imperatives) in order to go (infinitive of purpose)(vnpa)(home).”

Jesus was human. When he saw Mary and the Jews weeping he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. The first word means ‘to snort like a horse’ and means either ‘to be indignant’ at the sin that caused that misery, suffering and sorrow<sup>63</sup> or it means ‘to be moved with compassion’ for the person suffering. In this context the emphasis is on the second meaning. The second word means ‘to shake’ or ‘to be visibly agitated’ due to inward disturbance. When Jesus saw other people suffer, he was visibly agitated (12:27; 13:21; 14:1,27). Together these two words express the fact that *Jesus was indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but that he also was deeply moved with sympathy for the suffering people.* People noticed his intense emotion. They saw it in his face and heard it in the tone of his voice or his audible sighs. When the people showed him where they laid him, he burst into tears (11:34-35). His shedding tears (11:35) was a genuine expression of his love and sympathy<sup>64</sup> for the bereaved sisters and not the usual loud wailing of the Jews for the dead (11:33)<sup>65</sup>. Some Jews saw this as an expression of his deep friendship kind of love (cf. 11:5; 21:15-17) towards Lazarus, but other Jews criticized him for not preventing the death of Lazarus. Apparently the news about the raising of

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<sup>55</sup> G: hós

<sup>56</sup> G: hós

<sup>57</sup> G: klaió

<sup>58</sup> G: dakruó

<sup>59</sup> G: phileó

<sup>60</sup> G: oida

<sup>61</sup> G: deuro

<sup>62</sup> G: exo

<sup>63</sup> Mark 14:5

<sup>64</sup> Hebrews 4:15; Romans 12:15

<sup>65</sup> Mark 5:38-39

the only son of the widow of Nain<sup>66</sup> and the raising of the daughter of Jairus<sup>67</sup> had not reached them or dawned on them. And if it did, the death of Lazarus was different, because he was already four days dead. The case seemed hopeless!

Once more deeply moved Jesus came to the cave with a stone laid across the entrance to keep animals away and said, "Take away the stone". At that moment Martha lost sight of the Conqueror of death and only thought of the decaying body. She said that by this time there was a *continuous* bad odour, because he had been dead for four days. Embalming a body with spices was not as well developed in Israel as in Egypt. But Jesus directed Martha's thought to what he had said before (11:4,23,25-26), "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" Jesus did not intend to say that the performance of the miracle was dependent on Martha's faith. He intended her to understand that that if she would continue to trust him and his words, she would see the miracle as a sign (illustration, proof) that God's glory (divine attributes) was genuinely reflected in Jesus Christ (10:38)! She would know for certain that Jesus Christ was the visible image of the invisible God (11:40; 14:9)<sup>68</sup>!

They took the stone away. Jesus looked up towards God's throne in heaven and said, "Father (not: our Father), I thank you that you have heard me (aorist tense). I knew that you always *continue* to hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may *begin* to believe that you *once for all* sent" me. Jesus prayed as if the miracle had already taken place! He prayed audibly so that the people would begin to believe that God the Father always hears and grants the prayers of Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ was indeed sent by God the Father (as the true Messiah).

Then with a loud voice Jesus called, "Lazarus, come out!" He called with a loud voice, not to awaken the dead person from his death sleep, but to allow the people to realise that Lazarus is being raised from the dead by the powerful word of Jesus Christ. The dead man came out while he was still completely embalmed with strips of linen around his whole body and with a separate cloth tied around his face.

### **(VII) 11:45-57. The miraculous sign of Jesus had an effect in four directions.**

#### **a. First effect:**

**Many Jews, who were previously hostile towards Jesus, began to put their faith in him (11:45).**

**11:45.** Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come (vpaa) to visit Mary, and had observed (vpad) what Jesus had done (viaa), began to (ingressive aorist) put their faith (viaa) in him.

Many of these Jews came from Jerusalem to especially console Mary (cf. 11:19,31). The word 'to see' means 'to observe' and then 'to study and consider' what they have observed (cf. 1:14). The result was that they *began* to put their faith in Jesus Christ. Although many Jews only believed because they had seen a miracle (cf. 2:23-25; 8:30-31), we must assume that many others had a genuine believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (11:4,52; 20:30-31).

#### **b. Second effect:**

**The bitter enemies of Jesus devised a plot to kill Jesus (11:46-48).**

**11:46.** But some of them went (viaa) to the Pharisees and told (viaa) them what Jesus had done (viaa).

**11:47.** So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting (viaa) of the Sanhedrin. They said (viia), "What are we all the time (vipa) accomplishing, because this man is continually (vipa) performing many signs?"

**11:48.** If we let him alone (vsaa) like this<sup>69</sup>, everybody will believe (vifa) in him, and the Romans will come (vifd) and take away (vifa) from us both (our) place and (our) nation."

**Sanhedrin.** Some Jews that had come from Jerusalem were bitter enemies of Jesus Christ. When they saw the effect of the miracle on the Jews, they became even more embittered against Jesus. They rushed back to Jerusalem and called a special session of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the highest court in Israel<sup>70</sup> and the highest governing body of the Jews within the Roman Empire. It came into existence during the period of the Maccabees (about 150 B.C.) and was situated in Jerusalem. It consisted of 71 members: the high priest and ex high priests, who were members of the most important priestly families; the heads of families; the scribes, who were experts in interpreting the Jewish Holy Scriptures; and the teachers of the law, who continually elaborated the verbal tradition that was based on the written law. The sitting high priest was the chairman. The Sanhedrin had supervision over all religious matters, even of the Jews that lived in foreign countries!

The members of the Sanhedrin were most hostile against Jesus. They were desperate. If they allowed Jesus to continue performing miracles, all Jews would believe in him. Then the Roman rulers in Palestine would come and take away both their place (Jerusalem and the temple) and their nation (Israel). In contrast to what happened in John chapter 9, the Jewish religious leaders now acknowledged that Jesus performed miracles (5:8-9; 6:10-11; 9:6-7; 11:43-44)! They were afraid that the whole Jewish nation would believe that Jesus was the political Messiah that would free them from the Roman oppression. If the Romans heard that there was a national uprising, they would make an end to the Jewish national and religious existence and Israel would be scattered across the world.

#### **c. The prophecy of Caiaphas (11:49-52).**

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<sup>66</sup> Luke 7:11-17

<sup>67</sup> Luke 8:49-56

<sup>68</sup> Colossians 1:15

<sup>69</sup> G: houtós

<sup>70</sup> Matthew 5:22

**11:49.** But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being (vppa) high priest of that year, said (viaa) to them, “You do not know (by reflection)<sup>71</sup> (vira) anything

**11:50.** neither do you take into account (vipn) that it is expedient (vipa) for you that one man dies (vsaa) for the people and that the whole nation perish (vsam) not.”

**11:51.** Now this he did not say (viaa) of his own accord, but being (vppa) high priest that year he (viaa) prophesied that Jesus was about to (viia) die (vnpa) for the nation,

**11:52.** and not for the nation only, but in order that he might also gather (vsaa) into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (vprp).

**Caiaphas.** He was the high priest that year. From what the Bible and the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, wrote we can form a picture of this man. He was appointed as high priest by the Roman governor, Valerius Gratus, (the predecessor of Pontius Pilate) in A.D. 18<sup>72</sup> and was removed from his office by Vitellus (the successor of Pontius Pilate) in A.D. 36.

He was the son-in-law of Annas, who was high priest from A.D. 6-15. Josephus says that his name was Joseph and his nickname was Caiaphas, which means something like ‘fortune-teller’ or ‘a person practising physiognomy’ (reading the character of a person in his facial expression).

Caiaphas was envious of Jesus, because Jesus was so popular among the people<sup>73</sup>. Caiaphas was a sly manipulator and suggested that Jesus be killed so that the Jewish nation could continue to exist. Under the guise of being a noble patriot he wanted to remove a personal obstacle to his popularity and glory (11:49-50; 18:13,14,24). He was a hypocrite, because he would tear his clothes as an outward show of horror, while inwardly he was filled with glee that he had forced Jesus to make the statement that caused the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus to death<sup>74</sup>. As an outward show of piety he refused to enter the Roman praetorium in pretence that he would ceremonially defile himself before the Passover. But in the meantime he was inwardly preoccupied with murdering Jesus (18:28). He always got what he wanted. He was unrighteous and revengeful<sup>75</sup>.

As high priest that year he was the chairman of the Sanhedrin and was up and speaking almost all the time. His solution for the problem was as follows: “Following Jesus would mean the end of Jewish existence. But killing Jesus would mean the survival of the Jewish national and religious existence.” The irony is that precisely the opposite happened! When the Jews murdered Jesus they sealed their own doom as a nation (cf. 2:18-22)! The Roman armies came in A.D. 70 and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and thereby brought an end to the Jewish national existence. The plot of Caiaphas to kill Jesus succeeded, but the results were exactly the opposite of what he intended!

**The prophecy of Caiaphas.** John says that that Caiaphas did not say this on his own accord, but as high priest he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation. John teaches that God is sovereign in history. Caiaphas prophesied involuntarily by virtue of his office. In the early days of the Old Testament, the high priest of Israel declared the will of God by means of the Urim and Thummim<sup>76</sup>. Now God allowed the high priest to prophesy, even though he did not understand what he was saying. Caiaphas poured one meaning into his words, while God poured another meaning into his words! Nothing in history happens without God’s permission and control<sup>77</sup>. God overruled the words of Caiaphas in a sovereign way so that his words had a deeper meaning than even Caiaphas himself realised. Caiaphas said that it is better for the Jews that one man dies *in the place of* the people than that the whole Jewish nation perish. The words which Caiaphas spoke were a prophecy without him realising it! Also other Old Testament prophets spoke words which they did not fully understand<sup>78</sup>. Caiaphas gave one meaning to his own words, but in a sovereign way God gave another meaning to his words!

While Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin of the Jews plotted to murder Jesus, God planned to use his death as a means to save many people in the world! While Caiaphas intended something evil and is responsible for the wicked meaning of his words, God in a sovereign way intended something glorious. This passage gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the relationship between God’s sovereignty on the one hand and man’s responsibility on the other hand. Caiaphas was completely free to say what his wicked heart urged him to say. He spoke these careless words willingly and God will hold him responsible for the evil intent of his words<sup>79</sup>. Nevertheless, God’s eternal decree, sovereign will and power directed the choice of Caiaphas’ words so that the words of this cold-blooded murderer exactly expressed God’s wonderful plan of salvation! Caiaphas had an evil plan to murder Jesus in the interest of the Jewish nation. But God turned that evil plan into a good plan! Without him realising it himself Caiaphas became a prophet! Just like in the Old Testament, God had spoken through the wicked prophet Balaam<sup>80</sup>, so he now spoke through the wicked high priest Caiaphas. That is why John says, “He (Caiaphas) did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied

<sup>71</sup> G: oida

<sup>72</sup> Matthew 26:3,57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49

<sup>73</sup> Matthew 27:18

<sup>74</sup> Matthew 26:63-66

<sup>75</sup> Acts 4:6; 5:40

<sup>76</sup> Numbers 27:21

<sup>77</sup> Isaiah 14:24,27

<sup>78</sup> 1 Peter 1:9-12

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 12:36

<sup>80</sup> Numbers 23

that Jesus would die *in the place of* the nation and not only for the nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one” (11:51-52; cf. 10:16)<sup>81</sup>.

**The nation.** Not the *national* nation of Israel (8:39a)<sup>82</sup> is intended, but the *spiritual* nation of Israel<sup>83</sup>, because it is used parallel with the concept ‘children of God’. It is the holy nation of Israel<sup>84</sup>. It consists of the sick and lost sinners in Israel, who would believe in Jesus Christ<sup>85</sup> and who through rebirth would become ‘children of God’ (11:52; 1:11-13). It is Jesus’ own sheep for whom he laid down his life and whom he personally knew (10:11,15). It is his own sheep within the sheep pen of the nation of Israel (10:16a).

**The scattered children of God.** Not the Jews living in foreign countries<sup>86</sup> are intended, but the non-Jews (the Gentiles) who lived scattered across the whole world and would believe in Jesus Christ<sup>87</sup>.

They are Jesus’ own sheep within the many sheep pens of all the other nations in the world (10:16b). Jesus died in the place of two kinds of people: the believers within Israel<sup>88</sup> and the believers among all the other nations in the world<sup>89</sup>. Jesus repeats this same idea in John 12:32, “When I am lifted from the earth, I will draw all men (all the chosen believers) to myself”.

**To bring them together and make them one.** God has only ONE ‘people of God’ consisting of believers that are former Jews and believers that are former non-Jews. The Bible teaches one flock with one shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (10:16). Jesus Christ will bring together the believers from the nation of Israel and the believers from the other Gentile nations and make them one (11:51-52). Jesus Christ will bring together the full number of elect Jews in all generations and the full number of elect Gentiles in all generations and make them one in Jesus Christ<sup>90</sup>. Whether Jews or Greeks, they are all baptised by one Spirit<sup>91</sup> into one Body<sup>92</sup>. Jesus made no distinction between the believers from Israel and the believers from the Gentile nations.

The Bible teaches only one vineyard<sup>93</sup>; one flock (10:16); one God of Jews and non-Jews<sup>94</sup>; one way to God the Father (14:6); one Lord<sup>95</sup>; one root of the olive tree<sup>96</sup>; one Body<sup>97</sup>; one foundation<sup>98</sup>; one people<sup>99</sup>; one man to which the one bride is bound<sup>100</sup>; one gospel<sup>101</sup>; one (people) in Christ consisting of former Jews and non-Jews<sup>102</sup>; one head of the body<sup>103</sup>; one new man created from former Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers<sup>104</sup>; one Spirit through whom former Jews and non-Jews have access to God the Father<sup>105</sup>; one household of God<sup>106</sup>; one holy temple in the Lord<sup>107</sup>; one dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit<sup>108</sup>; one group of heirs consisting of former Jews and non-Jews<sup>109</sup>; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all<sup>110</sup>; one Mediator between God and man<sup>111</sup>; one house of God in which Moses is a servant and Jesus Christ is the son over the house<sup>112</sup>; one sacrifice

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<sup>81</sup> 1 Peter 2:9-10

<sup>82</sup> cf. Hosea 1:9; Romans 9:6a

<sup>83</sup> Romans 9:6b

<sup>84</sup> Exodus 19:5-6

<sup>85</sup> Luke 5:32; 19:10

<sup>86</sup> Matthew 23:15

<sup>87</sup> Revelation 5:9-10

<sup>88</sup> Matthew 10:5-6

<sup>89</sup> Matthew 28:19; cf. Romans 1:16; 10:12-13)

<sup>90</sup> Romans 11:25-26a; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:13-18; 3:2-6; Hebrews 11:39-40.

<sup>91</sup> cf. Mark 1:8

<sup>92</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>93</sup> Matthew 21:41-43.

<sup>94</sup> Romans 3:29-30

<sup>95</sup> Acts 10:34-36

<sup>96</sup> Romans 11:16-24

<sup>97</sup> Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 3:2-6; 4:4

<sup>98</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11

<sup>99</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10

<sup>100</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2

<sup>101</sup> Galatians 1:8; Hebrews 4:2

<sup>102</sup> Galatians 3:28

<sup>103</sup> Ephesians 1:9-10,22

<sup>104</sup> Ephesians 2:14-15

<sup>105</sup> Ephesians 2:18

<sup>106</sup> Ephesians 2:19

<sup>107</sup> Ephesians 2:21

<sup>108</sup> Ephesians 2:22

<sup>109</sup> Ephesians 3:6

<sup>110</sup> Ephesians 4:4-6

<sup>111</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>112</sup> Hebrews 3:6

that made the saints perfect forever<sup>113</sup>; one Lawgiver and Judge who is able to save and destroy<sup>114</sup>; and one New Jerusalem or one Bride as God's people on the new earth<sup>115</sup>. And all believers from all the natural nations in the world (including Israel) must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (17:20-23)<sup>116</sup>!

#### **d. Jesus withdrew to the desert (11:53-54).**

**11:53.** Now from that day they plotted (viad) in order that they might put him to death (vsaa).

**11:54.** Therefore Jesus was no longer moving about (viia) openly among the Jews, but withdrew (viaa) from there to the region near the desert, to a village called (vppp) Ephraim, and there he stayed (viaa) with his disciples.

Jesus withdrew to a village in the desert in the beginning of February A.D. 30. The village was probably situated in the desert of Judea, north of Jerusalem and west of the River Jordan.

#### **e. Third effect:**

**The many people who came to the Jewish Passover Feast kept expectantly looking for Jesus (11:55-57).**

**11:55.** Now the Passover of the Jews (30 AD) was (viia) near (approaching), and many went up (viaa) to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover, in order that they might purify (vsaa) themselves.

**11:56.** So they were looking (viia) Jesus and were saying (viia) to each other while they were standing (vpra) in the temple, "What do you think (vipa), that he will in no way (double negative) come (vsaa) to the feast?"

**11:57.** Now the chief priests and Pharisees had given (vila) orders that if anyone knew (by observation)<sup>117</sup> (vsaa) where he (Jesus) was (vipa), he should report<sup>118</sup> (vsaa) it, in order that they might arrest (vsaa) him.

Jews came from all the countries where they lived. Some came earlier (March A.D. 30) in order to find lodging and to purify themselves for the feast. The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was probably proclaimed far and wide. There was an atmosphere of expectation. People talked about Jesus and wondered whether he would come to the Passover Feast (April A.D. 30). While the Gospel of John mentions three Passover Festivals which Jesus attended (2:13,23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; cf. 19:31), the other three Gospels only mention the last. The Jewish religious leaders had given orders that people must report the whereabouts of Jesus so that they may arrest him. While the people looked at Jesus as the Messiah, *the Jewish religious leaders treated Jesus as a criminal.*

#### **f. Fourth effect: the faith of the disciples was strengthened.**

The faith of Martha, Mary and the disciples of Jesus Christ was strengthened (11:4,15,26,40).

### **APPLICATIONS**

- 11:4. Realise that although sickness has its roots in the sin of the world, some sickness may serve to glorify God!
- 11:6. Know that real trust in God can sometimes cause you to wait to act instead of rushing away to act.
- 11:20-27. While in Luke 10:38-42 Martha rushed around instead of sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to his words, here in John 11:20-27 she went out to meet Jesus and listen to his words. Martha changed and so can you.
- 11:25-26. Although the physical body of a believer will die, his spirit or soul will never die, that is, will never be thrown in hell, but will live in the presence of Jesus Christ. At the resurrection also his physical body will be raised to life and receive immortal life.
- 11:33-35. Like Jesus Christ, Christians too should be indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but deeply moved with sympathy for the suffering people.
- 11:47-48. Realise that certain religious people are more concerned with political power and gain than with the righteousness of God's Kingdom.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 11:1-16. Why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die?
- 11:7-10. What does Jesus mean by walking by day and not by night?
- 11:11-15. How do Christians regard death?
- 11:16. What kind of a person was Thomas?
- 11:17-27. What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life?
- 11:28-32. What is the difference between the response of Martha and the response of Mary?
- 11:33-44. In what way is the glory of Jesus Christ revealed in the raising of Lazarus from death?
- 11:45-57. What were the effects of the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead?

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<sup>113</sup> Hebrews 10:14

<sup>114</sup> James 4:12

<sup>115</sup> Revelation 21:1-3,9-10

<sup>116</sup> Ephesians 4:3

<sup>117</sup> (G: ginóskó

<sup>118</sup> (G: ménuó