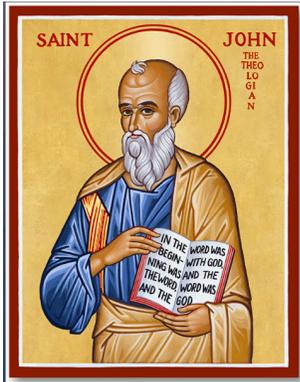


John 11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)



The Death of Lazarus

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,[a] “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” 5 Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6 after having heard that Lazarus[b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

7 Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 8 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 10 But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” 11 After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” 12 The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” 13 Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15 For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 Thomas, who was called the Twin,[c] said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus[d] had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles[e] away, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Jesus Weeps

28 When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” 29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” 40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” 43 When he had

said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place[h] and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. 53 So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples.

55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus[i] was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Footnotes:

John 11:3 Gk him

John 11:6 Gk he

John 11:16 Gk Didymus

John 11:17 Gk he

John 11:18 Gk fifteen stadia

John 11:25 Other ancient authorities lack and the life

John 11:27 Or the Christ

John 11:48 Or our temple; Greek our place

John 11:57 Gk he

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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Overview

Comparison with Canonical Gospels

Pericope	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Raising of Lazarus*				11:1-44
The Chief Priests and Pharisees Take Counsel against Jesus				11:45-53
Jesus Retires to Ephraim				11:54-57

*The other resuscitation Gospel stories are listed in the end notes. Lazarus the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17) and the raising of Jarius' daughter (Mark 5:35-43)

Themes

- Incarnation
 - 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world."
 - "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me.
- Replacement
 - 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. 53
- Rejection
 - 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"
 - 45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done.
- Discipleship
 - 16 Thomas, who was called the Twin,[c] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."
 - 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Key Stories and Teachings

In the Synoptic Gospels the cleansing of the Temple is the trigger event for the Sanhedrin (JWJ: though one could argue Palm Sunday would have been a trigger for the Romans if they knew what it symbolized.) In John the trigger is the raising of Lazarus. (Temple, the author, accepts that the Johannine narrative is actually correct and the Marcan/Synoptic difference is based on Mark's exposure to St. Peter. He heard St. Peter preach and tell stories. And Peter was not with Jesus when the Lazarus story occurred. He arrives for Palm Sunday. Similarly there is no mention of Peter in the Gospel of John from Chapter, 5, 7-12. Temple's conjecture.)

The Raising of Lazarus

Chapters 11-12 serve as a transition between the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. Even as he gave sight to a blind man, paradoxically the gift of life to a dead man leads to Jesus' death. The Sanhedrin decide he must be killed to protect the state of Israel from the Romans.

The story of Lazarus prepares the reader for the story of the resurrection.

Beth-any means "the house of the poor". There is some evidence that it was a community outside Jerusalem where poor, sick and needy people could be cared for. Jesus had been there before. And he has a special affinity for those afflicted, isolated and set aside in the community.

11:4 The "glory" the purpose of Lazarus' sickness and death is to show the glory of God in his being brought back to life from the dead; and to put in motion the actions that will lead to Jesus' death and glory on the cross – his resurrection.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

11:25-26 The difficulty of the logic in these verses may be deliberate. This is not a logical subject. Jesus brings the future resurrection and eternal life into the present.

11:27 Martha responds with belief in Jesus himself, and it is this belief that brings life. She does not imply that she understands and affirms his logic.

11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life... the one... believing in me will never die." Life in the Bible means life to its fullest extent. It does not mean just existence. It conveys the fullness of life. A lie for which we are ideally made where we experience Jesus and God fully.

Eternal life begins not when we die, but when we become a Christian, albeit that that life is interrupted by the painful and horrible realities of our physical death.

Mary going to the tomb to weep and meet Jesus foreshadows Mary Magdala who goes to Jesus tomb to weep and meets the risen Lord. Martha calls Jesus rabbi as does Mary Magdala.

25 "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Mary already believes in the Pharisaic tenet about resurrection on the last day. The problem is that it brings her no comfort. Jesus responds saying he is the resurrection and the life.

How can Jesus be the resurrection? Fellowship with Jesus Christ is participation in the divine life which finds its fullest expression in triumph over death. Life is a larger word than Resurrection; but Resurrection

is the crucial quality of Life. The inclusion of it therefore adds vastly to the effectiveness of the saying, "I am the resurrection and the life."

There is no denial of the Pharisaic tenet of resurrection on the last day. But Jesus is insisting that for those who are in fellowship with Jesus the life to which that resurrection leads is already present. This is the Johannine doctrine of life and the doctrine of Paul¹.

11:17-27 This is all about faith. Jesus is bringing God's new world to birth. The key to sharing the new world is faith; believing in Jesus, trusting he is God's Messiah, the one coming into the world, into our pain, sorrow and death.

11:28-37 Jesus shares the grief of the family and the crowd for the death of Lazarus. When Jesus weeps:

- We are not just seeing a flesh and blood human reaction; we are seeing the Word made flesh (1:14)
- The Word is weeping at the grave of his friend – God is weeping

This is part of the mystery of John's Gospel. God made flesh, fully flesh, fully human. And the flesh being the Word/God incarnate, fully divine.

You also must ask is part of Jesus grief for what he knows is coming for himself? Doesn't he also know what questions will be asked as he is dying and dead:

- If he could save others why can't he save himself?
- Why can't the doer of other signs, produce a miracle for himself?

John is saying that the answer is that *through* his own sharing of the common fate of humanity, that the world can be saved.

There is a straight line between Jesus' tears in 11:35 to the death in which Jesus would share, not only the grief but also the doom of the world.

We also see the foreshadowing of the Eater morning story. Jesus asking Mary where is Lazarus laid. Mary Magdalene asking Jesus where is laid. (Two weeks later). The story of Lazarus and Jesus echo each other. It may be that the other Gospel did not include the story to protect Lazarus, who was no longer alive when this Gospel is written.

¹ Colossians 3 (NRSV)The New Life in Christ

3 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your[a] life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.[b] 7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.[c] 8 But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive[d] language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 11 In that renewal[e] there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord[f] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ[g] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.[h] 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Chief Priests and Pharisees Take Counsel against Jesus

11:45-53 The decision to put Jesus to death stems from his raising Lazarus from the dead.

11:50 A cynical political judgement ironically contains a profound theological truth.

11:51 Caiaphas is prophetic – and does not know it. John sees, after the fact, that Caiaphas unwittingly prophesized what would happen to the Jewish people and the Temple.

John views it as divine will that Jesus die. The Good Shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

Jesus Retires to Ephraim

From the very beginning he has told us that Jesus is the lamb of God (1:29, 36). Jesus has spoken of his own death and resurrection in terms of the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple (2:19-21). He has declared that the son of man will be lifted up (3:14-15) so that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life. He has spoken of giving his own flesh for the life of the world (6:51) and of the shepherd giving his life to save his sheep. (10:15-18).

In parallel we have seen the escalation of hostility toward Jesus by the Jewish authorities in Judea. They came to listen to him, question him, argue with him and then moved to arrest him, and have him stoned to death. And now the combination of Jesus ministry and their murderous intent comes into focus. They are simply waiting for the right opportunity.

Jesus goes to Ephraim in the hill country 15 miles from Jerusalem. Will he return to Jerusalem for the final confrontation? Passover is ten days away.

Reflections

1. How can the story of Lazarus encourage you when answers to your prayers are delayed?
(Moody)
2. What do Jesus' tears tell you about him? What difference does that make to you today? (Moody)
3. In what way does the power of Jesus give you strength as you face up to your own mortality?
(Moody)

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- The Oxford Bible Commentary
- William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel
- Tom Wright, John for Everyone Part 2, Chapter 11-21

Detail

Raymond E. Brown Notes²

Chapters 11-12 serve as a transition between the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. Even as he gave sight to a blind man, paradoxically the gift of life to a dead man leads to Jesus' death. The Sanhedrin decide he must be killed to protect the state of Israel from the Romans.

In the blind man story the commentary follows the act. In the raising of Lazarus, the commentary precedes the act – if it had been after it would have been an anti-climax.

In the dialogue, Martha already believes Jesus is the Messiah and that her brother will rise on the last day (standard Pharisaic belief at the time.) Jesus leads her to a deeper faith.

Jesus is the resurrection and the life, so that whoever believes in him will never die.

Lazarus' miraculous return to life fulfills Martha's aspiration, but it is still only a sign. Lazarus will die again. That is why he emerges from the tomb with the burial clothes still on him.

Jesus comes to give eternal life impervious to death, as he symbolized by emerging from his tomb and leaving his burial clothes behind in the tomb. (John 20:6-7)

When comparing the raising Lazarus from the dead and other resuscitation acts by Jesus: Lazarus the son of the widow of Nainⁱ (Luke 7:11-17) and the raising of Jarius' daughterⁱⁱ (Mark 5:35-43). Evangelists view these as resuscitations similar to those done in the OT by prophets Elijahⁱⁱⁱ and Elisha^{iv}. Resuscitations restore ordinary life; resurrection involves eternal life.

11:45-53 The Sanhedrin are provoked by the size of the following Jesus is getting and the fear he could be proclaimed Messiah and bring down the wrath of Rome.

Caiaphas the high priest utters a prophecy and does not realize it. He means that Jesus should die instead of the nation and the Temple. But John the evangelist sees this to mean that Jesus will die on behalf of the nation and in deed to gather together all the dispersed children of God and make them one. The Sanhedrin then plot to kill Jesus and the reader is prepared for what is to come at Passover.

The Harper Collins Study Bible Notes³

Jesus now risks his life to give life to his friend Lazarus. This scene occurs with a crowd witnessing Jesus' actions and words.

The story of Lazarus prepares the reader for the story of the resurrection.

11:6 Jesus seems to deliberately let Lazarus die. Jesus is acting on his own sense of timing.

11:9 Jesus knows that his own hour has not yet come.

11:17 Jewish custom at the time was to bury someone immediately after death, i.e. the same day. It is also held that the soul lingered near the body for three days. So death was truly final on the fourth day after death.

11:24 Many Jews at the time believed there would be a final resurrection of every one, although others denied this idea.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

² Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament

³ The Harper Collins Study Bible

11:25-26 The difficulty of the logic in these verses may be deliberate. This is not a logical subject. Jesus brings the future resurrection and eternal life into the present.

11:27 Martha responds with belief in Jesus himself, and it is this belief that brings life. She does not imply that she understands and affirms his logic.

11:33 Jesus has profound human emotions.

11:45-53 The decision to put Jesus to death stems from his raising Lazarus from the dead.⁴

11:50 A cynical political judgement ironically contains a profound theological truth.

11:51 Caiaphas is prophetic – and does not know it. John sees after the fact the Caiaphas unwittingly prophesized what would happen to the Jewish people and the Temple.

L. William Countryman Notes⁵

The audience for this work, the Johannine community, must know a good deal about these stories and know that Lazarus and his sisters are related, friends of Jesus and involved in a significant scene in the next chapter.

11:11 Sleep is a common metaphor for death.

11:25 I am the resurrection and the life. Martha acknowledges and agrees with the statement. She believes in Jesus. The power and the authority of Jesus are such that he is life, and death is not the ultimate reality.

11:33 Jesus is angry. The outpouring of grief unleashes his own grief.

11:36 Jesus makes no effort to hide his arrival.

11:43 Jesus calls his own by their name, and Lazarus knows his voice and comes out of the grave. This fulfills what Jesus said in 11:3 about the Good Shepherd and their sheep. He is the gate by which Lazarus reenters the world of the living. He is the resurrection and the life.

11:45-54 Raising Lazarus directly leads to Jesus' death. It is a political decision, not a legal decision. The Jewish authorities are afraid of disrupting the balance with Rome. In 66-70 CE (37 years after Jesus' death and 30 years before Gospel of John is written, the Jewish revolt against Rome causes exactly the devastation the Jewish authorities feared would result from Jesus. Then it occurred again in 132-35 CE.

What is interesting is that Jesus has avoided death threats and mobs until now in the Gospel. What changes? John views it as divine will that Jesus die. The Good Shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

Josh Moody Notes⁶

Jesus' delay is hard to understand. Is it motivated by love of God? Knowledge that he must let Lazarus die to make the point on who and what he is?

⁴ Mark 14:1-2 (NRSV) The Plot to Kill Jesus

14 It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus[a] by stealth and kill him; 2 for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

⁵ L. William Countryman, The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel

⁶ Josh Moody, John 1-12 For You

11:16-18 Doubting Thomas – this is the first of three episodes in John that involve him. He is somewhat an Eeyore-type character. He seems to have some insight into what following Jesus will mean for the disciples, and the risk they are all taking going back so close to Jerusalem.

11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life... the one... believing in me will never die.” Life in the Bible means life to its fullest extent. It does not mean just existence. It conveys the fullness of life. A lie for which we are ideally made where we experience Jesus and God fully.

Eternal life begins not when we die, but when we become a Christian, albeit that that life is interrupted by the painful and horrible realities of our physical death.

11:33 Jesus experiences the deep human emotions of grief.

11:41-42 Why does Jesus give thanks? It could be that when the stone is rolled away there is no smell. So Jesus knew he had been heard. But Jesus may also be giving thanks because he has confidence that his prayers regarding Lazarus have been heard.

11:45-53 Some believe and others report back to the Sanhedrin what they have seen. The real problem now is not the works, or the words, it is the political implications of Jesus. He has suddenly become a very dangerous person to the stability of the Jewish-Roman relationship. The source of this discussion may have been Nicodemus who was a member of the Council. John does not say.

11:49 Caiaphas frames the substitutional role of Jesus death relative to the Jewish people – he is acting as an unknowing prophet.

11: 53 “So from that day on they planned to put him to death.” This is judicial murder.

The Oxford Bible Commentary Notes⁷

The raising of Lazarus is the seventh and most important sign in the Gospel of John. It directly foreshadows Jesus’ own death and resurrection.

Jesus frames the passage from death to life as corresponding to the passage from unbelief to belief.

Lazarus in the tomb embodies the power of death. When he comes out of the tomb and is unbound he is an illustration of the capacity of faith.

The story also foreshadows what will happen to Jesus as he returns to Judea in order to die and be raised from the dead.

Mary going to the tomb to weep and meet Jesus foreshadows Mary Magdala who goes to Jesus tomb to weep and meets the risen Lord. Martha calls Jesus rabbi as does Mary Magdala.

There is a contrast between the two stories:

Lazarus is dead for four days and Jesus for three days.

Lazarus will die again. Jesus is resurrected to eternal life with God.

Jesus anger before the tomb may be more against the power of death than the grief and mourning of the people around him.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a public act. It is witnessed by many people. They then divide into two groups – those who seek to believe in Jesus, and those who seek to destroy Jesus.

⁷ The Oxford Bible Commentary

The main concern of the Sanhedrin (which now includes the Pharisees who will not be mentioned again in John) is to avoid Roman reaction against the Jewish authorities and the Temple. In the Synoptic Gospels the Sanhedrin meets after Jesus has been arrested. In John they meet to plot his arrest before the anointment at Bethany – and then have later hearings to try him.

Caiaphas prophesizes that Jesus will die for the people of Israel, and John the evangelist expands that for all people.

William Temple Notes⁸

Two problems critics cite about the raising of Lazarus:

1. Could it have happened?
2. If it happened, why did the Synoptic Gospels omit it?

In the Synoptic Gospels the cleansing of the Temple is the trigger event for the Sanhedrin (JWJ: though one could argue Palm Sunday would have been a trigger for the Romans if they knew what it symbolized.) In John the trigger is the raising of Lazarus.

Temple accepts that the Johannine narrative is actually correct and the Marcan/Synoptic difference is based on Mark's exposure to St. Peter. He heard St. Peter preach and tell stories. And Peter was not with Jesus when the Lazarus story occurred. He arrives for Palm Sunday. Similarly there is no mention of Peter in the Gospel of John from Chapter, 5, 7-12. Temple's conjecture.

11:4 The "glory" the purpose of Lazarus' sickness and death is to show the glory of God in his being brought back to life from the dead; and to put in motion the actions that will lead to Jesus' death and glory on the cross – his resurrection.

11:9 Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is telling his disciples not to fear going to Judea. It is not yet his time.

11:15 "For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Do the disciples not yet believe in Jesus? Yes, but not firmly. They will betray him and deny him. They have faith but nothing compared to what they have years later.

25 "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Mary already believes in the Pharisaic tenet about resurrection on the last day. The problem is that it brings her no comfort. Jesus responds saying he is the resurrection and the life.

How can Jesus be the resurrection? Fellowship with Jesus Christ is participation in the divine life which finds its fullest expression in triumph over death. Life is a larger word than Resurrection; but Resurrection is the crucial quality of Life. The inclusion of it therefore adds vastly to the effectiveness of the saying, "I am the resurrection and the life."

There is no denial of the Pharisaic tenet of resurrection on the last day. But Jesus is insisting that for those who are in fellowship with Jesus the life to which that resurrection leads is already present. This is the Johannine doctrine of life and the doctrine of Paul⁹.

⁸ William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel

⁹ Colossians 3 (NRSV)The New Life in Christ

3 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your[a] life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.[b] 7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.[c] 8 But now you must get rid

27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world." This is Mary's most complete confession of faith.

11:44 Loose him and let him go home. The grave clothes that hold him fast are symbolic of old habits of sin that cling to us. When sin is eradicated the old habits that bind us must be broken. Jesus has freed Lazarus from death's grip.

11:45-57 The motive of the Chief Priests is political. They are no longer focused on works, words or the sabbath. They are focused on their own survival. The raising of Lazarus is such an amazing event that it risks overturning the power structure and bringing on the wrath of the Romans. If the crowd crowns Jesus as the Messiah a rebellion will break out. And the Sanhedrin must do everything possible to prevent that event.

Let one man die for the people. This prophecy is written down after the fall of Jerusalem. The city has been destroyed. That is the cause of the diaspora that sends the Johannine community away to southern Turkey or Syria.

John the evangelist uses Caiaphas' words to summarize the Gospel. It is an unconscious parallel to John 3:16.

Tom Wright Notes¹⁰

11:1-16 God does not play games with us. But God's timing is not our timing.

What was Jesus doing – I suspect praying. Wrestling with his father's will. He is praying for wisdom and guidance as to his own plans and movements.

The story is about Lazarus – but more importantly it is about Jesus.

Beth-any means "the house of the poor". There is some evidence that it was a community outside Jerusalem where poor, sick and needy people could be cared for. Jesus had been there before. And he has a special affinity for those afflicted, isolated and set aside in the community.

11:17-27 This is all about faith. Jesus is bringing God's new world to birth. The key to sharing the new world is faith; believing in Jesus, trusting he is God's Messiah, the one coming into the world, into our pain, sorrow and death.

11:28-37 Jesus shares the grief of the family and the crowd for the death of Lazarus. When Jesus weeps:

- We are not just seeing a flesh and blood human reaction; we are seeing the Word made flesh (1:14)
- The Word is weeping at the grave of his friend – God is weeping

of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive[d] language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

11 In that renewal[e] there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord[f] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ[g] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.[h] 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹⁰ Tom Wright, John for Everyone Part 2, Chapter 11-21

This is part of the mystery of John's Gospel. God made flesh, fully flesh, fully human. And the flesh being the Word/God incarnate, fully divine.

You also must ask is part of Jesus grief for what he knows is coming for himself? Doesn't he also know what questions will be asked as he is dying and dead:

- If he could save others why can't he save himself?
- Why can't the doer of other signs, produce a miracle for himself?

John is saying that the answer is that *through* his own sharing of the common fate of humanity, that the world can be saved.

There is a straight line between Jesus' tears in 11:35 to the death in which Jesus would share, not only the grief but also the doom of the world.

We also see the foreshadowing of the Easter morning story. Jesus asking Mary where is Lazarus laid. Mary Magdalene asking Jesus where is laid. (Two weeks later). The story of Lazarus and Jesus echo each other. It may be that the other Gospel did not include the story to protect Lazarus, who was no longer alive when this Gospel is written.

11:38-46 One of the most dramatic moments in the Gospels. Jesus stands in front of a crowd in public and shouts for Lazarus to come out. And the dead man comes out.

Martha warns him about the smell – and when the stone is removed there is no smell recorded. And Jesus preemptively thanks the Father. He doesn't pray for the power to raise Lazarus. He thanks God that he has heard him.

This raises the question about Jesus courting death. The disciples have warned him not to go back to Judea (11:8). Thomas gloomily proposes that they go and die with him (11:16). Jesus has been praying for his dear and dead friend. Praying that his body won't decay and will be ready to come back to life.

You cannot disconnect the fate of Lazarus from the fate of Jesus. Jesus in praying for and raising Lazarus from the dead, was aware that he is walking towards his own death. That this is the tipping point.

11:47-57

"What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place[h] and our nation."

11:48 is the only place in the four Gospels where the word Romans is mentioned. This is the explicit reason for the Jewish authorities to want Jesus killed. He endangers their precarious existence with Rome. Raising people from the dead, in public, was not something that could be denied or overlooked. The crowds would interpret this as Jesus is the Messiah from God and they should make him King and he will overthrow the Romans.

This forecast/prophecy is full of irony and paradox. Caiaphas correctly sees that one man must be sacrificed to protect the people and the Temple. 40 years later there would be a revolt and the city sacked and the Temple destroyed. That occurs before the Gospel is written.

And Jesus death would not be for just the Jews but for all people. (10:16)

This two level scene: the politician plotting a judicial murder and John interpreting it as a divine prophecy brings John's slow build up on the meaning of Jesus' death to a climax.

From the very beginning he has told us that Jesus is the lamb of God (1:29, 36). Jesus has spoken of his own death and resurrection in terms of the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple (2:19-21). He has declared that the son of man will be lifted up (3:14-15) so that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life. He has spoken of giving his own flesh for the life of the world (6:51) and of the shepherd giving his life to save his sheep. (10:15-18).

In parallel we have seen the escalation of hostility toward Jesus by the Jewish authorities in Judea. They came to listen to him, question him, argue with him and then moved to arrest him, and have him stoned to death. And now the combination of Jesus ministry and their murderous intent comes into focus. They are simply waiting for the right opportunity.

Jesus goes to Ephraim in the hill country 15 miles from Jerusalem. Will he return to Jerusalem for the final confrontation? Passover is ten days away.

Key Stories and Teachings

Resuscitations in the OT and NT

ⁱ **Luke 7:11-17 (NRSV) Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain**

11 Soon afterwards[a] he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. 13 When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus[b] gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" 17 This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

Footnotes:

Luke 7:11 Other ancient authorities read Next day

Luke 7:15 Gk he

ⁱⁱ **Mark 5:35-43 (NRSV)** 35 While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing[a] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Footnotes:

Mark 5:36 Or ignoring; other ancient authorities read hearing

ⁱⁱⁱ **1 Kings 17:17-24 (NRSV) Elijah Revives the Widow's Son**

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18 She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" 19 But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." 24 So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

^{iv} **2 Kings 4:32-37 (NRSV)** 32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. 33 So he went in and closed the door on the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. 34 Then he got up on the bed[a] and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and while he lay bent over him, the flesh of the child became warm. 35 He got down, walked once to and fro in the room, then got up again and bent over him; the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 Elisha[b] summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite woman." So he called her. When she came to him, he said, "Take your son." 37 She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground; then she took her son and left.

Footnotes:

2 Kings 4:34 Heb lacks on the bed

2 Kings 4:36 Heb he