

SS-John 11:1-16-Jesus' Response to a dire Need-02/14/21

Intro: "We need to try to understand Jesus' response to the dire need of His friends."

I JESUS SUMMONED—John 11:1-4

A Lazarus and his sisters (John 11:1-2)

- a** **Power**-John records seven miracles in his Gospel that **proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ** (changing water into wine in 2:1-11, **healing a sick boy from afar** in 4:46-54, **healing an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda** in 5:1-18, the **feeding of over 5000** people in 6:5-14, **walking on the Sea of Galilee** in 6:16-21, **healing a man blind from birth** in 9:1-7, and culminating here in the **resurrection of Lazarus**). **Jesus had demonstrated His power and authority over the laws of nature, diseases, and hunger**. Here He **demonstrates His authority over our greatest enemy: death**.
- b** **Person**-The town was **Bethany**, located about two miles east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho, at the home of a family consisting of **two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazarus**. This particular Lazarus is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels (Luke's Lazarus is a beggar featured in a parable in 16:20-21), so John makes certain to identify him as the brother of these two sisters. **His name is a variant of the name Eleazar, which means "he whom God helps."**
- c** **Presence**-Jesus had been in Jerusalem (John 10:22-23), but because of opposition He had retreated to the other side of the Jordan River into the area of **Perea** where **John the Baptist had baptized** (vs. 40). **While He was there, Lazarus fell sick**. John further identifies Lazarus as the **brother of the Mary who had "anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair"** (11:2), **an incident he would record in chapter 12** (vss. 3-8).

B The sickness (John 11:3-4)

- a** **Intervention**-It was undoubtedly when **the sisters saw Lazarus's sickness getting worse that they thought of Jesus and how He might intervene**. They **had seen His miracles** and knew by now what He could do, so they had confidence that He also could remedy this current crisis. They sent word to Him, asking Him to come and help. Their reference in verse 3 to Lazarus as **"he whom thou lovest"** indicates that **Jesus and Lazarus must have had a special friendship**.
- b** **Indication**-Jesus' response was encouraging: **"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"** (vs. 4). Jesus' apparent downplaying of Lazarus's illness is surprising, for it certainly was serious, but that was not His point. **He was indicating that He felt no sense of urgency in getting to Lazarus**. We now understand, of course, that **He was actually waiting for Lazarus to die before He arrived, but those with Him were not aware of His plan**.
- c** **Information**-Meanwhile, in Bethany, the sisters were waiting eagerly for Jesus to come. No doubt they expected Him to respond quickly because of His fondness for their brother and the direness of the situation. Here was a need that only Jesus could fill, and they felt confident in His response. **Their faith was strong, so they did not even make a specific request of Jesus. They simply informed Him of the situation.**

II JESUS DELAYED—John 11:5-14

A The delay (John 11:5-6)

- a** **Love**-John makes a point of telling us that **Jesus loved all three members of this family**. The word translated **"loved"** is the Greek word **agapaō**, usually referring to love that is **self-sacrificial, always willing to put others first**. John tells us this to assure us that Jesus' **delay** in responding to the sisters' plea **indicated no callousness on His part toward Mary, Martha, or Lazarus**.
- b** **Lag**-**Despite hearing of Lazarus's sickness, Jesus stayed where He was for two more days**. This indeed seems a very strange response to such an urgent and desperate need. "How could the compassionate Messiah ignore the legitimate needs of one of His favorite families? As in many of our own trying experiences of life, the answer lay in a **simple but sweeping principle: "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"**" (Douglas and Comfort, eds., *New Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Tyndale). Jesus had a bigger purpose in mind than merely healing a sick friend.
- c** **Lesson**-Jesus knew all about the suffering His friends must have been going through as He tarried. He also empathized with them in their suffering (cf. vss. 35-36). **Jesus always had compassion for those in need. His reason for delaying was not unconcern, but rather to ensure the fulfillment of a greater purpose than anyone at the time could have realized**. Had He arrived immediately, He surely could have healed Lazarus's sickness. **But by delaying, He was preparing the way for an even greater intervention.**
- d** **Locked**-By allowing time for Lazarus to die, **Jesus set the stage for the greatest of His seven miracles in John's Gospel**. Remember this the next time you cry out to Jesus for help but He does not seem to respond; it may well be that **He has in mind something more wonderful and glorious than you could ever imagine!**

B A puzzling decision (John 11:7-8)

- a** **Surprise**-After the two-day delay, Jesus announced to the disciples, **"Let us go into Judaea again"** (vs. 7). This was surely a **surprise to them, as seen in their responses to Him: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"** (vs. 8). This was an expression of fear and dismay. As far as the disciples were concerned, **it was dangerous for Jesus to go again into the vicinity of Jerusalem. It seemed like a foolish idea to them.**
- b** **Scene**-"Jesus' decision to return to the Jerusalem area in Judea seemed foolhardy to the disciples who reminded Him that **the Jews there had recently tried to stone Him** (10:31, 39). They obviously did not yet appreciate the **Father's protection of His Son until His appointed hour or the inevitability of Jesus' death"** (Constable's Notes, net.bible.org). Since Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, it would seem that, humanly speaking, **He would have wanted to go to Bethany immediately. Apparently the Father restrained Him.**
- c** **Sovereign**-Jesus' **timing was perfect, since it was guided and directed by the Father**. **God is there to help us in any situation at just the right time and in accordance with His purposes.**

C A curious response (John 11:9-10)

a	Rhetorical -As He often did, Jesus answered His disciples' question with a question of His own, a rhetorical one . Our first impression of this question may be that it had nothing to do with the disciples' concerns. He simply asked if there are not twelve hours in a day. Then He went on to explain that if someone walks in the light of the day, he will not stumble, but if he walks in the darkness, he is at great risk of stumbling. What did this have to do with the danger He was about to put Himself in?
b	Return -Jesus meant that as long as He walked in the light of His Father's will, He was safe and protected from danger. Even though there had been threats against His life when He was previously in Judea, those threats were meaningless until the time came for Him to lay down His life as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was willing, therefore, to return to Jerusalem, and He went without fear. It would only be when His earthly work was done that anyone could have such power over Him (cf. 19:11).
c	Reliable -We too are in the safest place possible when we are living within God's will. Staying obedient to Him is equivalent to walking in the light, while living in disobedience allows spiritual darkness to invade our lives. We are told that darkness is not an entity of its own, but merely the absence of light. There is power in light, but not in darkness. When the part of the earth that we are on rotates away from the sun, we are covered in darkness. Likewise, when we turn from God, spiritual darkness envelops us. It cannot touch us when we walk in His light.

D Sleeping Lazarus (John 11:11-14)

a	Illustration -Jesus then said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (vs. 11). He meant that Lazarus had now physically died. This was a common figure of speech used by Jesus (cf. Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52).
b	Ignorance -The Apostle Paul used this expression frequently. In discussing the Lord's Supper, for example, he writes, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor. 11:30). With reference to the coming rapture, he writes, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (15:51-52). In his discussion of the rapture in I Thessalonians, he says, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (4:13-14).
c	Illness -The disciples missed Jesus' figurative reference completely: "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well" (John 11:12). In other words, the disciples thought that sleep would help Lazarus to recover from his illness, so why wake him up?
d	Illogical -John explains to the reader that Jesus was referring to Lazarus being dead, but the disciples thought He meant Lazarus was just taking a nap. It made no sense to them for Jesus to travel back to a place where His life was in danger if all He was going to do was wake a sick man up from a needed nap! They must have felt thoroughly confused!
e	Incidents -In the Old Testament Scriptures, the word "sleep" was also a common metaphor for death, but the idea of coming back from death had been unknown since the miracles of Elisha (cf. II Kgs. 4:32-35). Jesus Himself had previously raised the daughter of Jairus from death (cf. Mark 5:22-23, 35-42), but the disciples made no connection here with that incident because they did not grasp what Jesus really meant. He had to tell them plainly that Lazarus was dead in order for them understand.

III JESUS DETERMINED—John 11:15-16

A Glad (John 11:15)

a	Power -Jesus said He was glad for the disciples' sake that He had not been there in time to save Lazarus because this would now be an opportunity for them to strengthen their faith in Him. "If Jesus had been with Lazarus during the final moments of Lazarus's sickness, He might have healed him rather than let him die. But Lazarus died so that Jesus' power over death could be shown to His disciples and others" (Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale).
b	Performance -Jesus' determination to return to Bethany is seen in His words, "let us go unto him." He needed to be there in order to perform the greatest of His seven miracles as presented in John's Gospel, and the disciples needed to be there to see it happen. Jesus was not glad Lazarus had died, but only that the disciples would now be witnesses to the glory of God's kingdom that would be manifested when He brought life out of death. The miracle would mirror how the gospel brings those who are spiritually dead to eternal life.

B	Doubt (John 11:16) -Thomas's response shows that his fears had devolved into resignation and apathy. The name Thomas in Aramaic means "twin," as does the Greek equivalent "Didymus," but we do not know anything about his twin. Thomas's propensity for pessimism and doubt is evident when he makes the sarcastic comment that they should all go along so that they might all die along with Jesus. But we should give him credit for remaining loyal and willing to follow Jesus, no matter the cost.
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Conclusion: "It should be a goal of all Christians to emulate Jesus' deeds of love and compassion for the glory of."