

John 11A

- Jesus' tumultuous week during the Feast of Tabernacles has come to an end
 - And among the many things we learned from John's account of that week in Jerusalem, the overriding message was clear
 - The learned and sophisticated Jews in Jerusalem couldn't agree on the significance of Jesus and His message
 - They divided over His identity
 - They disputed the source of His power
 - And they were further confused by their leaders who insisted Jesus was an agent of Satan
 - So despite all its advantages and learning, the heart of the nation missed their Messiah when He was sent to them
 - Meanwhile, Jesus continues to minister in Galilee
 - Galilee was the backwater, low rent, red-headed stepchild of Israel
 - Home to Nazareth, the place from which nothing good comes, or so it was said
 - And yet this is the place where Jesus was received with joy, embraced and celebrated by many people
 - So as we leave John's four-chapter examination of the Feast of Tabernacles, John ends with a simple footnote that emphasizes the key message

[John 10:40](#) And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

[John 10:41](#) Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."

[John 10:42](#) Many believed in Him there.

- As I said, the contrast couldn't be clearer between Jerusalem and the Galilee

- As Jesus returns to the place beyond the Jordan, to the place where John first practiced his baptism ministry, Jesus is met by those who believe
 - More than that, this place is willing to agree that though a man perform no signs, nevertheless his word can still be true
 - John spoke of the coming Messiah, though John was not equipped with any supernatural signs
 - John came only with a word from the Lord, nevertheless many believed
 - And now that Jesus has come, it's clear that John's words were true, so many believed
- As we move into the next section of John's Gospel, we reach the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry as John recorded it
 - In what John has chosen to record so far, he's highlighted Jesus as the Light of Life, the Bread of Life and the Water of life
 - All of these metaphors focus on Jesus' life-giving power, spiritually speaking
 - So what better way to emphasize Jesus as the source of life than to relate His ability to raise someone from the dead
 - And so John chooses to record perhaps Jesus' most dramatic miracle in all the Gospels
 - Chapter 11 is the account of the raising of Lazarus
 - And interesting, none of the other Gospel writers chose to mention of Lazarus
 - So John chooses to record this scene as the final miracle (the seventh John records) of Jesus' earthly ministry
 - What follows in John's narrative is Jesus' preparation to die on the cross followed by His own resurrection

[John 11:1](#) Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

[John 11:2](#) It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

[John 11:3](#) So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

[John 11:4](#) But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

- The beginning of this account emphasizes the death of Lazarus and Jesus intention to ensure he died
 - Jesus and the disciples were walking back to the Galilee following the feast of tabernacles and then crossed through Bethany
 - Which puts them nearby the home of a family that Jesus knows well
 - Therefore, it makes sense to expect Jesus to call upon this family again as He passes through on His way back from Jerusalem
 - The family is that of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus
 - We remember that Jesus encountered Mary and Martha at an earlier moment, as recorded in Luke's Gospel
 - John reminds us that this Mary is the same one who anointed Jesus with ointment earlier
 - The story of Mary anointing Jesus is recorded only in Luke 7
 - Later, in Luke 10 we read the story of Mary and her sister Martha welcoming Jesus into their home
 - Interestingly, John is referring to an event he didn't record in his Gospel
 - Clearly, John had read Luke's account and expected his readers to have read it as well
 - Further proof that John was writing a Gospel with the intent to fill in gaps
- The focus of the story is Lazarus
 - Lazarus lives in Bethany, a town north of Jerusalem on the way back to the Galilee

- His name is a variation on the Jewish name Eleazar, which means the Lord helps
- And Lazarus is sick
- John clarifies that this Lazarus is the brother of that Mary
 - So the sisters send word to Jesus concerning their brother
 - It's understandable that Lazarus' family might assume Jesus would come to their aid
 - Their relationship and past experiences would naturally lead them to think that Jesus would be compassionate and willing to help
 - And Jesus *is* preparing to help them, though not as they might have expected
- His sisters describe Lazarus as the one Jesus loved
 - It sounds like Jesus had a particularly close relationship with Lazarus
 - Perhaps this is so
 - Or perhaps they simply meant that Lazarus was one of Jesus' sheep
 - Therefore, as His shepherd Jesus would be interested in saving Lazarus from death
- In either case, at hearing of Lazarus' condition, Jesus reassures the women
 - Jesus says the sickness will not end in death
 - Jesus chooses His words carefully here
 - He doesn't say Lazarus won't die
 - He says the sickness won't end in death, meaning when all is said and done, Lazarus won't be killed by this illness
 - Going further, Jesus explains that his sickness is for the glory of God
 - Similar to Jesus description of the blind man in chapter 9, Jesus declares that Lazarus' trial was instigated by God to offer opportunity to glorify Himself through His Son

- Once more, we come face to face with the reality that God uses the lives of men and women to demonstrate His immutable power and character
- Simply put, Jesus can't heal unless someone is sick
- And Jesus can't bring life except in the midst of death
- Ironically, it will be this particular miracle that ignites the leads directly to Jesus' own death
- This truth explains why Jesus does what he does next

[John 11:5](#) Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

[John 11:6](#) So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

- John wants his readers to understand that Jesus cared greatly for this family, both the sisters and their brother
 - John makes this point clear so we would will have the proper perspective as we read what comes next
 - After Jesus learns that Lazarus is near death in his sickness, He the chooses to stay two days longer in the place He was
 - His delay will ultimately lead to Lazarus dying from his sickness, but as John explains, Jesus' decision was not from a lack of concern or love for this family
 - It was a divine appointment
- After the delay, Jesus announces His intention to travel to the Lazarus' home as the sisters request
 - Lazarus' home was in the area of Jerusalem
 - So visiting him would involve re-entering a city where Jesus was under constant threat and just narrowly escaped an attack the prior week
 - So naturally, the disciples express concern over Jesus' plan
 - The exchange between Jesus and the disciples that follows is comical in the way it reveals the disciples' ignorance of their circumstances

[John 11:7](#) Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

[John 11:8](#) The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"

[John 11:9](#) Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

[John 11:10](#) "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

[John 11:11](#) This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

[John 11:12](#) The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

[John 11:13](#) Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

[John 11:14](#) So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,

[John 11:15](#) and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

[John 11:16](#) Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him

- Jesus announces He's returning to Judea again
 - The disciples respond predictably
 - They point out the obvious: there are people in Jerusalem who are seeking to kill you
 - And they ask why He would want to return there
 - On a human level, this is a sensible question
 - But it's because they are only thinking on a human level that we can know they weren't thinking spiritually
 - At the very least, they don't appreciate the Lord's power
 - In fact, it's quite remarkable that these men are still worried for Jesus' safety given all that they have seen thus far
 - They saw Jesus still wind and waves
 - They saw Him feed thousands of people miraculously
 - They saw Him walk on water, heal blind men, cast out demons
 - But still, these disciples express concern over Jesus being attacked by a crowd?

- It seems highly unlikely that they are speaking up over a concern for Jesus' safety
 - It's much more likely they are concerned for their own safety as they follow Jesus back to Jerusalem
 - Jesus' answer reflects this truth
 - Using the metaphor of light to describe Himself again, Jesus says if you walk in the daytime (i.e., in the Light), you won't stumble
 - So long as these disciples were following Christ, doing His will and not their own, they will not stumble
 - And in this context, to stumble means failing to please God
 - Notice Jesus isn't promising they will be safe from physical harm
 - Certainly, all the disciples did face brutality at the hands of their enemies
 - But that's not the most important consideration
 - Their first concern must be obeying the will of God
 - Everything else is secondary
 - In fact, if a disciple of Christ ceases walking in the Light, that is to cease living according to Christ's commandments and priorities, then they will stumble
 - And the fall that results brings eternal consequences
 - Whatever losses we suffer on earth as a result of our obedience to Christ won't compare to rewards awaiting the obedient servant in Heaven
- So having corrected the disciples for their fear born out of unbelief, the Lord explains why He must travel to Judea
 - Their friend Lazarus had fallen asleep and Jesus was going to wake him
 - In referring to sleep, Jesus employed a common euphemism in His day to describe death
 - Paul uses these same euphemism on occasion in his letters also to describe death and dying
 - Today, we have our own ways of referring to death with subtlety

- We say passed away
- Crossed over
- Resting in peace, etc.
- But the disciples completely missed the meaning of Jesus' euphemism and thought Jesus was speaking literally of sleeping
- So if the euphemism was so common, why didn't the disciples understand it?
 - I think the answer is because Jesus added another element to the euphemism that they weren't expecting and couldn't understand
 - Jesus said Lazarus was sleeping but then added that Jesus would wake Lazarus up
 - While people commonly used sleeping as a euphemism for death, no one ever spoke of "waking" up a dead person
 - So I assume the disciples were following Jesus until He threw them that curveball
 - Clearly, Jesus is referring to His plan to raise Lazarus from the grave
 - Which also tells us that the two day wait was to ensure Lazarus was good and dead
 - So when Jesus raises him, there will be no doubt among the witnesses that a true miracle had taken place
 - That truly, a dead man had been raised back to life
- In v.12, it's clear that the disciples are confused, since they offer Jesus the helpful consultation
 - They tell Jesus that if Lazarus was, in fact, sleeping, then there was no need for Jesus to go to his aid
 - Lazarus would recover on his own
 - The disciples use the Greek word *sozo*, which means cured or restored or saved
 - They are referring to Lazarus' illness, saying if Lazarus is just sleeping and not literally dead, then he will get better on his own
 - Once again, they are thinking only of themselves

- John explains in v.13 that the disciples were assuming the whole conversation was about sleep, so Jesus must dispense with His clever and subtle choice of words
 - As John writes in v.14, Jesus said to them plainly, He's dead
 - In my list of top ten funniest lines in the Bible, this one is near the top
 - Right up there with "this woman whom you gave me..."
 - It's funny, but it's also sad, because their comments demonstrate that it never occurred to them that Jesus could raise someone from the dead
- As a result, Jesus adds a rebuke, saying He was glad He wasn't there to heal Lazarus so that now they can experience seeing Jesus raise someone from the dead
 - As Jesus says, he wants to use this situation to bolster their faith
 - For few things are as dramatic and impressive as raising someone from the dead
- At this point, Thomas piped up with encouraging words for the group
 - This the first mention of Thomas speaking in the Gospels
 - His name is Jewish and means double or twin
 - Didymous was the Greek version of his name, and also means twin
 - Apparently, he was one of twins
 - Thomas is likely speaking for the disciples as a whole
 - They are focused on the dangers of the trip
 - They aren't quite sure what's driving Jesus to see Lazarus
 - And they are even more perplexed now that they hear Lazarus is dead
 - Nevertheless, they want to support their rabbi, so wherever He goes, we will go!
 - Thomas' response is really little more than bravado

- We know that when things do get tough for the disciples at the crucifixion, they run away quickly
- So, his declaration of solidarity is self-serving at best
- Following this call to arms, Jesus and the disciples return to Bethany

[John 11:17](#) So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

[John 11:18](#) Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;

[John 11:19](#) and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

[John 11:20](#) Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house.

[John 11:21](#) Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

[John 11:22](#) "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

[John 11:23](#) Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

[John 11:24](#) Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

[John 11:25](#) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

[John 11:26](#) and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

[John 11:27](#) She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

- Jesus leaves Bethany of Perea, where John was baptizing north of Jericho, to go back to Bethany in Judea, about 2 miles from Jerusalem
 - As they arrive, they learn that Lazarus had been dead already for four days
 - This mention of four days was significant
 - Jewish rabbinical teaching of the time held that a person's spirit lingered around the dead body for three days or until decomposition set in
 - Only after the hope of resuscitation was gone did the spirit of a person finally depart for Sheol
 - Of course, this teaching is false, but it held sway in the minds of many Jews

- So the Lord constructed this miracle to eliminate the possibility someone might attempt to explain away the miracle
- By waiting four days to raise Lazarus, no one could claim that Lazarus wasn't truly dead and Jesus merely resuscitated him
- In fact, as we will see, Lazarus' body was decomposing already
- Because this family was known in Jerusalem, a large gathering came to grieve
 - At Jesus' arrival, Martha goes out to greet Jesus while her sister Mary stays home
 - This is the same Mary and Martha from Luke 10
 - In Luke's account, Mary is the quiet sister sitting at Jesus' feet
 - While Martha is the leader in the home, busy and distracted
 - John's portrayal of Martha and Mary match Luke's in this regard
 - Martha comes to greet Jesus, but immediately she offers a gentle rebuke or at least complaint to Jesus
 - Why didn't He come sooner so He could heal Lazarus?
 - She shows her faith in Jesus as Messiah both in her words and in her expectations
 - Clearly she believes Jesus has the power to heal
 - And she recognizes that Jesus has a direct line to the Father
 - In response to her faith, Jesus promises that Lazarus will rise again, that is he will be resurrected
 - When Martha hears these words, she assumes Jesus is offering typical mourner condolences
 - We all like to remind a person grieving at a funeral that they will see their loved one again in Heaven and in the Kingdom
 - While this statement is true (at least in the case of Christians), it wasn't addressing Martha's concern over Jesus' delay
 - Martha says in v.24 that she realizes that Lazarus will be resurrected on the last day
 - Martha's eschatology is spot-on

- She's referring to Daniel 12, which teaches that the saints are resurrected prior to entry into the Kingdom of the Messiah
- But Jesus isn't talking about a future, final resurrection
- Jesus' response begins with another "I am" statement
 - Jesus says in v.25 that He is the resurrection and the life
 - He means He is the source of these things
 - Jesus is the one Who provides eternal life, as He's said various ways already (e.g., Light, Water, Bread)
 - And now Jesus says He will be the One to effect resurrection of every believer
 - The Bible teaches that our present body dies because of sin
 - But a new, eternal sinless body is prepared for all those who have believed in Jesus as Messiah
 - When that time comes, Jesus says He will provide the new body
 - So that even though our physical body does, we will live again
 - But first, we must gain the new spiritual life that comes by faith in Jesus
 - Then we are assured we will never die
 - Paul says the same thing this way

Rom. 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Rom. 8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- Notice Paul calls Christ the firstborn among many brethren
- Jesus' spiritual life is shared with many who are born again to be like Him
- And those the Father has predestined to this outcome are set on a course that always arrives at the end of glorification

- Roman 8 teaches there is an unbroken chain of salvation according to God's purpose
- So that the one who receives the life of Christ is assured that even though they die, they will live again
- Jesus ends His statement asking Martha does she believe this?
 - Jesus isn't asking Martha if she believes in the doctrine of resurrection
 - Martha already affirmed her belief in resurrection
 - Jesus is asking Martha if she believes Jesus' statements concern His identity
 - In John's Gospel, the matter always comes down to the identity of Jesus
 - Jesus is asking Martha if she believes that Jesus is the One who grants eternal life and has the power to resurrect the dead
 - Her response is the clearest profession of faith recorded in John's Gospel, and perhaps in any of the Gospels
 - She declares that Jesus is Lord
 - She declares He is the Christ (which means Messiah)
 - She declares He is the Son of God, which means Jesus is God Himself
 - And she declares that He has come into this world, which means He has descended from Heaven to enter Creation as a man
 - Putting all this together, Martha confesses a full and accurate understanding of Jesus' identity
- Why does Jesus ask her to make such a profession of faith at this moment?
 - Was Martha's profession of faith a prerequisite for Jesus to perform His miracle of raising Lazarus?
 - This can't be the answer, since Jesus came back to Judea expressly for the purpose of raising Lazarus
 - In fact, Jesus said that Lazarus' illness was intended so that Jesus would be glorified when He performed this miracle

- So we know that this moment doesn't turn on whether or not Martha makes a proper confession
- I see this moment as part of a larger picture that's forming in the events of Lazarus' death and resurrection
 - The events began with the death
 - Lazarus has died
 - Just as every person is born sinful and dead in their sins, as Paul says
- Next the story moves to a confession of faith in Jesus as Lord
 - Obviously, this is Martha's confession, not Lazarus'
 - But the point being made is not with respect to a specific individual
 - Rather, I believe a pattern is being emphasized
 - The pattern for how anyone may pass from death to life by faith in Christ
- So now following a confession of faith, what comes next in the story

John 11:28 When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

John 11:29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

- Following her declaration of faith in Jesus as Lord, Martha returns to her home where her sister is mourning the loss of her brother
 - As Martha arrives, she tells her sister that the Teacher is here and is calling for her
 - The title teacher is a personal way for these women to refer to Jesus, since they have known Him as a teacher in their home
 - We never saw Jesus issue this call for Mary directly
 - Instead, Martha relays the call to her sister
 - This is the next step in the pattern of moving from death to life

- Once a person has made a confession in Jesus, they had the life and will one day have the resurrection
- But in the meantime, they serve Christ by relaying His call to others
- We introduce Jesus as the Teacher, Who instructs us concerning Himself through His word
- We share the word of the Teacher with others, telling them that the Lord is calling them
- As Mary hears the news from Martha, she immediately leaves the mourners and her home to come to Jesus
 - As we saw early in this Gospel, people invite others to come and see the Lord
 - And when that call is issued, they respond by going to find Jesus
 - Metaphorically, this pattern describes the process of evangelism that is the church's mission on earth
 - We have life in Christ, and we await the resurrection He promises
 - And in the meantime, we call the world to know Him
 - In Mary's case, she was already a believer in Jesus, but again we're watching a pattern develop that is not reflective of any one person
 - It's also interesting that Mary leaves behind her home and mourners so that she may join Christ

John 11:30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.

John 11:31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

- When a person is called to come to Jesus, that call requires that we be willing to leave behind our old way of life
- We leave behind a world that mourns the death that sin requires
- We leave behind those who cannot see past the death of the body

- And we adopt a new perspective and outlook, not only on eternity but even on the world we know now
- We gain eyes for eternity
- As Mary comes to join Jesus, the crowd thinks she is going to mourn at the tomb
 - Wishing to be supportive, they follow her, so that not only are the sisters with Jesus but also a crowd of many witnesses
 - This offers us yet another piece in this puzzle
 - As we make our move from death to life, we create a testimony in our very lives that others around us will witness
 - Some will be intrigued by who we've become
 - And they will be drawn into a greater understanding of Jesus as a result
 - Because of Mary's departure, this crowd will become witnesses to perhaps Jesus' greatest miracle on earth
 - And as we'll see, their encounter with Jesus will persuade many to believe in Him
 - While at the same time inciting His enemy's to take action against Him

[John 11:32](#) Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

[John 11:33](#) When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

[John 11:34](#) and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

[John 11:35](#) Jesus wept.

[John 11:36](#) So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

[John 11:37](#) But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

- Now the focus of the story moves to Jesus' compassionate response to Lazarus' circumstances
 - As Mary approaches Jesus, it's clear she is in distress over Lazarus' death
 - We know she was already in mourning in the house

- She's still crying as she meets Jesus
- And as we saw her in Luke 10, Mary once again places herself at Jesus' feet
- In the next chapter, we will find Mary at Jesus' feet a third time
- She tells Jesus that had He been here, Lazarus would not have died
 - While her words are a rebuke of Jesus, they also serve as her acknowledgment that Jesus has the power over life and death
 - Yet they also reveal that Mary can't see any reason for hope now that Lazarus has died
 - Death is a fundamental barrier that Jesus intends to cross, and in so doing, He will prove Himself in a way no other miracle could
- Along with her is a crowd of mourners, also crying in sadness
 - Anyone who has attended a wake can appreciate the depth of emotion and grieving present in this moment
 - All of this turmoil was the result of one man's death
 - And that death was itself brought about by one man's sin
- So as Jesus experienced the group's mourning and reflected on the cause for it all, John says Jesus was deeply moved and troubled
 - The Greek words describing Jesus' reaction are quite a bit stronger than the English words the translators chose
 - For example, the Greek word for deeply moved is *enebrimesato*, which means to be moved with outrage and anger
 - It's a strong negative emotion, not a sympathetic one
 - And the Greek word for troubled is *etaraxen*, which is equally strong in meaning emotional turmoil or stirred up
 - Taken together, we quickly see that Jesus' emotional state was not one of joining in the mourning over Lazarus
 - Clearly, Jesus has something else on His mind
 - And in light of the pattern developing in this story, we must move our attention to a different issue than the sadness of the mourners

- Jesus is reacting in anger even outrage at the prospect of sin and the grief and damage it inflicts upon God's Creation
 - Jesus looks upon a family He loves mourning for the loss of a brother
 - And Jesus understands the spiritual source of this misery in the deceit of Satan and the sin of Adam
 - And He is outraged by the condition of fallen humanity
 - And He contemplates the work that will be required to address this problem
 - That work being His own death and suffering on a cross
 - And He stirred up by this and troubled by it
 - Such is the compassion of our God, that He was moved by sin to address it by His own death on our behalf
 - Death is not a part of God's perfect plan for Creation
 - God is not the author of sin
 - But God did proclaim that death would be the necessary response to sin
 - So that when sin arrived, so did death along with it
 - But knowing death would come, God was moved to provide a solution in His Son
- With that, Jesus asks to see the location of Lazarus' burial
 - They brought Jesus to the place, and then John writes the shortest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept
 - This moment has long been a source of great insight into Jesus' humanity while also being a source of great mystery
 - On the one hand, we see our Lord as compassionate, emotional, feeling what people feel in the face of death
 - And we're comforted to know that God can identify so strongly with our response to death in His Creation
 - It is an utterly crushing experiencing to watch the penalty of sin playing out in the death of a loved one

- The crowd interprets Jesus' weeping in this same way, concluding that Jesus was very close to Lazarus and therefore He mourned His loss
- On the other hand, *why* did Jesus feel this way? It's a bit of a mystery under these circumstances
 - Regardless of how much Jesus loved Lazarus, Jesus also knew that Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead
 - And though Jesus understood the mourners' pain and suffering, He also knew He was about give them immense joy at receiving Lazarus back from the grave
 - So knowing these things, why would Jesus have been moved to such despair now?
 - Wouldn't He have been feeling anticipation and even joy at knowing what was about to happen?
- So we're left searching for a reason that Jesus would have stopped to cry at the tomb just moments before He performed the resurrection
 - Perhaps His weeping anticipated His own death and burial
 - Perhaps He was weeping in sadness for all the suffering and loss of life that has been visited upon the earth across all time as a result of Adam's sin
 - Perhaps He's mourning the countless numbers who will die in their sins and never receive eternal life
 - Whatever has moved Jesus to tears, I believe it was a far, far greater concern than the temporary passing of this one man
- Others in the crowd think they see an opportunity to indict Jesus' power and authority
 - They know of Jesus' healing of the blind man a few days earlier in Jerusalem, so they ask if Jesus could have done more for this man?
 - Their question seems reasonable, but it reflects a doubting and critical perspective
 - There are enemies of Jesus even in this moment
 - Jews who are Jesus' enemy and are looking for any occasion to tear down His claims

- For that group, Jesus' inability to save Lazarus is evidence He not Who He claimed to be
 - Jesus responds by moving directly to the miracle

[John 11:38](#) So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

[John 11:39](#) Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days."

[John 11:40](#) Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

[John 11:41](#) So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

[John 11:42](#) "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."

[John 11:43](#) When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

[John 11:44](#) The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

- Once again, John describes Jesus as being moved with outrage as He approached the tomb
 - This tomb had a stone rolled over the entrance, which immediately reminds us of another tomb mentioned in the Gospels
 - Jesus' own tomb is described in the same way
 - This detail may explain Jesus internal anger and turmoil
 - Imagine if you knew you were going to be killed by crucifixion in the near future
 - And you knew the type of burial you would experience
 - And you knew you were made to endure this agony because of another's mistake
 - Wouldn't you experience turmoil and even outrage at the prospect of such a plan? And wouldn't the sight of grieving and of a tomb like your own evoke such feelings?
 - It seems reasonable that Jesus' reactions are looking ahead to bigger things

- And if so, then we should also understand His words as having a larger purpose and meaning than simply the raising of this one man
- Next, Jesus orders that the stone be removed
 - But Martha, the one who earlier professed belief in resurrection, is the first to protest the command
 - She points out that the body is decomposing and therefore opening the grave would not be a good thing
 - So though Martha understood the promise of resurrection, she wasn't prepared to see God bringing new life in the immediate moment
- Jesus rebukes Martha gently by reminding her that those who have faith in Christ should expect to see the glory of God
 - Not only at the resurrection on the last day, but even now as God works in Creation to bring glory to Himself
 - On this day, Martha and the crowd would see a resurrection take place
 - And in a day to come, Mary will arrive at another tomb with a stone rolled back
 - And in generations to come, many corpses will be raised spiritually speaking
 - So the people removed the stone, probably unsure of what was going to happen next
 - At this moment, Jesus prays a sincere prayer, yet one spoken for public effect
 - Jesus' prayer is not one of intercession or even petition
 - He doesn't ask the Father to raise Lazarus
 - Instead, Jesus prays a prayer of thanksgiving that the Father has heard Jesus
 - What the Father has heard was Jesus' request that Lazarus be raised
 - And whatever the Son asks of the Father, He will receive

- Jesus evidently asked the Father to do this thing, and then the Father sent Jesus to raise Lazarus
- Now as Jesus prepares to act, He announces publicly through His prayer that this work is the result of the Father's will
- Jesus is careful to explain that His public prayer was for the benefit of the people, since Jesus Himself already knew that He was heard
- This moment offers us a couple of reminders about the function of our prayer life
 - First, we know we will be heard by Christ and that Christ's requests will be heard by the Father
 - And so if we are praying in the Father's will, we also will be heard

1John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

- Secondly, we know from elsewhere in the Gospels that our public prayers must not be for the purpose of drawing attention to ourselves as unbelievers love to do

Matt. 6:7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

- Yet there is a public benefit in our prayers
 - We can pray before others to make clear what lies in our heart and so that our testimony can be made all the more clearly
 - This one purpose in prayer
 - As Jesus said, the Father already knew that Jesus understood these things, but still it pleased the Father that Jesus made it known to the crowd as well
- Finally, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."
 - It has been said that had Jesus not specified the name Lazarus then perhaps all the dead would have been raised
 - Such is the power of Christ's word to accomplish God's purpose

- Only the word of God was required to raised a dead body from the grave
- And so it will be on the day of our resurrection, when we will be raised into new bodies at the sound of a shout

[1Th. 4:16](#) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- And so it was for Lazarus
 - The man who had died came walking out of the tomb, still wrapped in his bandages
 - The modern horror figure of the mummy is patterned directly off the story of Lazarus
 - The Jewish rite of burial involved a very loose wrapping of the body in cloth to hold the embalming spices near his body
 - It was not tight fitting, so Lazarus would have been able to walk without much trouble
- Raising dead men from the grave is evident throughout the Bible, and Jesus' miracle is not even the first such resurrection in scripture
 - Two prophets raised bodies from the dead
 - Elijah raised the widow's son in 1Kings 17
 - Elisha raised another boy in 2Kings 4
 - Both of these events involved the prophets praying and laying on top of the body of the person, ostensible to warm it up
 - In their cases, a word was not enough...they had to work at the effort while expecting God to perform the miracle
 - In that case as in this one, the Lord used only His word to effect the miracle
 - That was the essential difference
 - In the earlier cases, the prophet's validated the truth of their word by the power of their works

- In this case, Christ validated His truth of His claims by the power of His word
- And in both cases, there is no more powerful display than raising a person from the dead
- Later the Bible records the Apostles raising men from the dead and speaking of future times when this miracle will be done again
 - And even in the meantime, there are credible claims of God continuing to show these powerful signs on rare occasions
 - Such displays are generally limited to places where the word of truth is only now penetrating the culture, and so a display of its truth is helpful to its movement
- Finally, let's consider what actually happened to Lazarus in this moment
 - His body was certainly dead, which means His spirit was no longer occupying his body
 - Without a body to occupy, the spirit of a man must travel to a home God has prepared for it
 - At this point in human history, the Lord held all spirits in a place called Sheol, as described in Luke 16
 - That place was divided into two halves, called Abraham's Bosom and Hades
 - Abraham's Bosom was a place of comfort holding the souls of OT saints
 - While Hades was a place of torment holding souls of unbelievers
 - Given Jesus' love for Lazarus, we know Lazarus was a believer like his sisters
 - So we might assume that his soul was moved temporarily into Abraham's Bosom for the four days
 - While he was there, we might wonder what he learned, what he was told
 - Did he retain memories of this place after he resurrected?
 - More importantly, what did he think when he found himself resurrected

- Did he know he would be coming back?
- When he did learn of Jesus' plan, was he disappointed to return?
- Especially when he learned he would have to die again
- How did this experience change his view of life and of death?
 - The story of Lazarus ends here, but I wonder how much differently he chose to live after this day than he did before?
 - This is the final pattern in our comparison with the moving from death to life
 - Our faith in Jesus Christ assures us that someday we will be raised to new life
 - To a new body, a new world and a new family
 - Lazarus was given a preview of that new world, and no doubt it changed him in profound ways
 - But in a very real sense, we've received a similar preview
 - His came in the form of a 4-day excursion into Sheol
 - Ours comes in the form of God's word, which is even more powerful than any personal revelation
 - The question is are we allowing the revelation of God's word to inform and change our walk on earth to the purpose of becoming a more effective witness?