

John 11:1-46 • Jesus Our Personal Lord & Savior

Introduction

As Christians, we would probably always agree that Jesus is our personal Lord and Savior. But do we believe that “in general” as part of our overall belief system and because it’s the right-sounding thing, or do we believe from the very fire of our inner core? We can intellectually assert “God is in control” while privately adding, “so why isn’t He immediately responsive to my need right now?” Jesus is concerned with our **entire** life—both in this life as well as the next—and what is perceived as a “delay” or “inaction”, is probably part of a greater work in progress on our faith and personal relationship with Him.

¹Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

⁴But 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.”

⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. ⁷Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

⁸The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?”

⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” ¹¹This 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.”

¹²The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”

¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

¹⁴So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”

¹⁶Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”

[Read v.1-16]

Q: What was the relationship to one another of the principle characters involved (Jesus, Lazarus, Mary and Martha)?

A: Lazarus, Mary and Martha are all related. Jesus frequently stayed at their home in Bethany, especially during the times of holy holidays, as Bethany was very near Jerusalem. Lazarus was either the middle or the youngest child, Martha being the oldest. (Most likely, the order was Martha, Mary, Lazarus.). Also, it says that Jesus “loved” Lazarus (v. 3), as well as Mary and Martha (v. 5).

Q: How do we know that Lazarus was wealthy?

A: Mary brought a pound of spices, worth at least 300 denarii (see John 12:1-5). Also, Lazarus had his own burial site on his property. He is also referred to as “Lazarus of Bethany” as if well-known in the community. Additionally, he must have had a large house with sufficient means to take care of Jesus and His disciples. This also raises the issue that having wealth is not condemned by Jesus.

Q: What did Jesus do when He first heard that Lazarus was sick, and why?

A: He remained in Galilee, at least a 2-day’s journey away. He remained there to complete the work that the Father had given Him, as well as to allow Lazarus to die. He obviously knew what He was intending to do (v. 11).

Application: Does Jesus not immediately responding to even our most dire, personal need mean He does not love us? Have there been situations where later you realized that what appeared to be a “delay” was actually God working a greater thing in your life?

Q: Why were the disciples afraid in verse 8, and what is the meaning of Jesus’ response to them, verses 9-16?

A: There have been earlier references that Jesus’ life was in danger in Judea, specifically in Jerusalem (John 10:31, 39-40) which was 2 miles away from Bethany. (Note also Thomas’ concern in v. 16.) Verses 9-10 mean that with Him present, He being the light of the world – they have nothing really to fear. It’s those who do not have the light that stumble. The raising of Lazarus was a prelude to Jesus’ final teaching that He Himself is the resurrection and the life. That if He can raise Lazarus from the dead (dead for 4 days and entombed), He can raise anybody.

Q: What was the purpose for Jesus’ delay in coming to Lazarus’ aid?

A: That the miracle He was about to do would not magnify the attention given to miracles, but that it would produce a spiritual example that they might believe (v. 15).

¹⁷So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

²⁰Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. ²¹Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”

²⁷She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”

²⁸When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. ³¹Then 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. ³²Therefore, 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.”

³³When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, ³⁴and said, “Where have you laid him?”

They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”

³⁵Jesus wept.

[Read v.17-27]

Q: In verses 20-28, what is Martha's take on this whole thing with Jesus and her brother, and why do you think she went out first to greet Jesus while Mary remained in the house?

A: Martha's first response is to scold Jesus (v. 21). In other words, she's saying, “Why weren't you here when we needed you?” It's obvious that even though she knows God will do whatever Jesus asks, she does not consider the possibility that Jesus will cause her brother to come back to life immediately (v. 24).

Q: Why is verses 25-26 the most important statements in history?

A: The most important personal issue in life is what happens to us when we die. Jesus is saying that there is an afterlife, a resurrection, that He is the source of that resurrection, and that all it takes to obtain eternal life is to believe in Him by faith.

Q: What is Martha's response in verse 27, and what is it she doesn't believe?

A: She believes in Jesus “title”—that He's the Messiah—but she doesn't believe what Jesus can do for her personally.

[Read v.27-37]

Q: Why was Mary remaining in the house?

A: While Martha went out to scold Jesus (note that she meets Him on the outskirts of Bethany), Mary is overcome with grief (v. 31). While Martha is struggling with a belief problem, Mary is struggling from an emotional perspective.

Q: How does Mary respond the same and differently than her (older) sister?

A: Her question seems to be one of mystery rather than rebuke. Unlike Martha, she falls at His feet. (Mary is also one who later anointed Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair.)

Application: How are we more like Mary or Martha in how we approach God, particularly in times of great need? Do we come respectfully but withholding, or do we come worshipping and acknowledging?

Q: What was Jesus' response to the whole scene?

A: Jesus entered into their grief.

Point: Faith is not about overcoming emotion or not having to go through intense emotional circumstances; faith is about enduring in spite of them, and at the same time knowing God has a greater good at work.

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³⁶So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”

³⁸So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus 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.”

⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they removed the stone.

Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴²I 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.” ⁴³When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”

⁴⁴The 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.”

⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. ⁴⁶But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Q: How do verses 36-37 capture the essence of the problem of belief?

A: It's obvious from their solution in verse 37 that their belief in Jesus falls short. The application to us is in verse 36. They said, “See how much He loved him!” They, and we, ought to say, “See how much He loves us!”, recognizing that He sees beyond the surface circumstances to our whole being, both in this present life and the next.

[Read v.38-46]

Q: Why is it significant that Jesus waited until Lazarus had been entombed FOUR days?

A: The beliefs of the day—as taught by the religious leaders themselves—was that the spirit hovered over the corpse for 3 days. It wasn't until the 4th day that they believed a person was, by their definition, “dead”. Even by their own standard, they could not deny that Lazarus was truly brought back from the dead.

Q: In verse 40, what must Martha command her servants to do in order to see the glory of God? How does this tie into the need to believe?

A: She must command them to “remove the stone.” In order for her to believe, she must obey. Belief is intimately tied into obedience.

Q: What was the purpose of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead?

A: Verse 42: “...so that they may believe that...” He is sent directly from God.

Q: What is the relationship between the command of Jesus in verse 44 and our own sin and fear of death?

A: When Jesus calls us, we are freed from the bondage of sin and the penalty of death.

Q: What was the reaction to those who witnessed the raising of Lazarus?

A: Some believed and other didn't (verses 45-46).

Q: Is the raising of Lazarus the same as the resurrection of Lazarus?

A: No. Lazarus was raised from the dead. This was to demonstrate that **Jesus** is the resurrection. But Lazarus eventually died (again) a physical death. His resurrection took place after that.

Application:

- *What issues are we struggling with right now, wondering if God cares enough to do something about them here and now?*
- *Do we acknowledge Christ as the “general” Lord and Savior of the whole universe, yet somehow not acknowledge Him as our **personal** Lord and Savior?*