

Jesus Raises Lazarus

Summary and Goal

John 11 contains the most detailed account of one of Jesus' miracles of raising the dead, specifically, that of Lazarus. We see Jesus' closeness with Lazarus's family, most notably his sisters, Mary and Martha. In this passage, their brother, Lazarus, had passed away, and their grief was compounded by the fact that Jesus did not come to them right away. Indeed, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days by the time Jesus arrived. In this session, we will see that Jesus is Lord over even death itself. In demonstrating His authority over death, Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, acts both as One who grieves and as One who conquers.

Session Outline

1. Jesus has authority over the curse of death (John 11:20-27).
2. Jesus grieves the curse of death (John 11:32-37).
3. Jesus undoes the curse of death (John 11:41-44).

Background Passage: John 11

Session in a Sentence

Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead, revealing His authority over death and foreshadowing His own resurrection, which would occur soon after.

Christ Connection

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He showed that He has power over death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, we have full assurance that Jesus will one day defeat death forever and resurrect us from the dead.

Missional Application

Because we have been given eternal life in Christ, we glorify God always, even in sickness and in death, trusting in His power to raise us from the dead.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the content on page 38 in the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG) to bring up the subject of death, a topic people don't like thinking about too much.

We don't see many graveyards around churches anymore. This may have something to do with zoning restrictions or other legalities, of course, but most churches for the last fifty years or more have not been built with an eye to burying the departed around their grounds as in eras past. Imagine worshipping on Sundays and being able to look out the window to see rows and rows of headstones. How might that change your perspective on what's happening inside?

The truth is people don't like thinking about death too much. We do everything we can to keep it at bay, from cosmetic surgery to health foods and fitness. Of course, modern medicine and technology are doing wonders at lengthening the living age. But death keeps coming. Not a single one of us can avoid it, no matter how much kale you eat.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 Since death is so certain, why is it still so jarring to us when it occurs? (we weren't created for death but for a life of glorifying God; death drastically changes the experience of life for those still living; the death of others is a reminder that we all will face our own death one day)

SUMMARIZE: John 11 contains the most detailed account of one of Jesus' miracles of raising the dead, specifically, that of Lazarus. We see Jesus' closeness with Lazarus's family, most notably his sisters, Mary and Martha. In this passage, their brother, Lazarus, had passed away, and their grief was compounded by the fact that Jesus did not come to them right away. Indeed, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days by the time Jesus arrived. In this session, we will see that Jesus is Lord over even death itself. In demonstrating His authority over death, Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, acts both as One who grieves and as One who conquers.

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Point 1: Jesus has authority over the curse of death (John 11:20-27).

PACK ITEM 5: GLORIFY GOD: Use the *summary* and the **Warren Wiersbe quote** below to help set the context for this miracle. Refer to the part of the quote on the poster (italicized below) to help frame the way believers should look at hardship and even death—as an opportunity to glorify God by glorifying the Son.

- *Summary:* Jesus received word that Lazarus was deathly ill. With supernatural knowledge, Jesus declared to His disciples that the sickness would not end in death but would serve to glorify God and the Son. But then He stayed where He was for two more days until Lazarus died. Only then did He travel to Bethany. Yet He went not to mourn Lazarus's death but "to wake him up" (John 11:1-15).
- "Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' sickness or even healed it from where he was; but he chose not to. He saw in this sickness an opportunity to glorify the Father. *It is not important that we Christians are comfortable, but it is important that we glorify God in all that we do.*"¹ –Warren Wiersbe (1929-2019)

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How can believers glorify God and the Son, Jesus, in the way they respond to death? (they can believe and act according to the truth that Jesus has authority over death; they can mourn death with hope in the coming resurrection for believers who have died; they can proclaim with confidence the coming resurrection to the world)

READ John 11:20-27 (DDG p. 39).

²⁰ As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. ²² Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

²³ "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. ²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 39) to note how Jesus presented Himself to Martha as the solution to death by referring to Himself as **the resurrection and the life**.

Martha knew Jesus had extraordinary power. Perhaps she even grasped His divine identity, but at the least she knew He held the power of healing in His hands. Yet her understanding of His power still fell short, believing He had to be present to heal Lazarus. Furthermore, she could not fathom that Jesus could raise someone who had been dead for so long. But Jesus declared the truth: He is **the resurrection and the life**.

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- Death has been plaguing us *almost* from the very beginning (Gen. 3), but death always feels unnatural to us because it is—we were not created to die. Its inception on earth was God’s judgment for Adam’s sin, but God also sent Jesus to end it. Thus, we learn this important thing—God is God even over death.
 - So how are we to rise over death? How can we finally conquer this insatiable enemy that always gets the last word? The God who sovereignly sanctioned death as the wages for sin (Rom. 6:23) can sovereignly conquer death by making payment for those wages Himself. He can undo it. Only He can overcome it.
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EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 39) to establish that belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus is essential to Christianity and means our future resurrection in Christ also will be physical.

When Jesus refers to Himself as the resurrection and the life, He is speaking of **the resurrection of the physical body**. To be a Christian, you have to believe in Christ’s bodily resurrection from the dead (Rom. 10:9). But we should also understand that the hope of the Christian is not a disembodied experience but receiving a resurrected and glorified body at the second coming of Christ, when He will establish the new heavens and the new earth.

- The apostle Paul addressed the future bodily resurrection of believers in 1 Corinthians 15. Our resurrection body will be like Jesus’ resurrection body. Finally free of sin, anxiety, sickness, pain, and death, we will be as we were meant to be. Our bodies now are winding down, falling apart, and decaying every day until we die, but our resurrection body will never die, just as Jesus will never die again.
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 39).

Resurrection: The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of **Christ** from the dead, and it will take place at the future **return** of Christ. The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians **confidence** that death has been **defeated** in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Essential Doctrine “Resurrection”: Both the Old and New Testaments teach that one day believers will experience a resurrection of the body from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; John 11). The promise of the resurrection is found in the resurrection of **Christ** from the dead, and it will take place at the future **return** of Christ. Because Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection, Christians can be assured that their resurrection will be similar in nature, meaning it will be both bodily and glorious (Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:22-23). The hope of the future resurrection gives Christians **confidence** that death has been **defeated** in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Point 2: Jesus grieves the curse of death (John 11:32-37).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read John 11:32-37 (DDG p. 40).

³² As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and told him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died!”

³³ When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you put him?” he asked.

“Lord,” they told him, “come and see.”

³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Couldn’t he who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 40) to highlight that Jesus’ weeping in response to death displayed both His personal investment in the lives of His friends and His full humanity.

Jesus is invested in our lives. We see an example of this when we read that “Jesus wept.” Jesus saw the grief of His friends and He entered into their suffering with them. These two words also reveal another level to which Jesus entered our suffering. How human was Jesus? The answer is *truly*. He was not and is not disconnected from those He loves but truly like us and therefore able to sympathize with our griefs and weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

- The incarnation of Christ, the full humanity of Jesus, is important for us to remember lest we have a Christianity—and a gospel—detached from the reality of life and death. Unbeknownst to us, we needed God to come in the flesh. We needed God to bear our burdens. We needed God to suffer and die in our place so we could be saved from our sin. God fulfilled our need through sending His Son. We needed the God-Man who actually touched lepers, brought children up onto His lap, reclined at the dinner table with His buddies, and yes, wept over the death of His friends.
- “Jesus wept” means Jesus was not hovering above the experience of human frailty and sorrow like some divine hologram. “Jesus wept” means Jesus was not impervious to the impact of death upon humanity. “Jesus wept” means Jesus was not above getting hurt, or even dying Himself.

Commentary: John’s Gospel as a whole appears to address, at least implicitly, a kind of Gnostic heresy that believed flesh is evil at best and an illusion at worst and therefore suggested Jesus was God but not really a human being. Counter to this heresy, John’s Gospel proclaims the Word *became* flesh and *dwelt* among us (John 1:14). John recounts the historical truth that the Son of God became one of us because the human predicament in sin is so dire it requires nothing less than the actual space-time intervention of the God of the universe. John 11, in particular, shows us that this intervention was a full-on, in-depth adoption of the entire human experience.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 40) to connect the love Jesus demonstrated in weeping at Lazarus’s death with the love He demonstrated by taking death upon Himself at His crucifixion.

If Jesus didn’t love us, He wouldn’t be moved at all by the reality that we face in death. But the Holy One of God’s outlook on an unholy humanity involves compassion (Matt. 9:36). In fact, the plight of humankind doesn’t just move Jesus to mourn their death, it moved Him to take our plight upon Himself. It was love that brought the Son of God to earth. It was love that brought Him to mourn at the death of Lazarus. And it was love that brought Christ to the cross. He took death head-on, submitting Himself to its terrible darkness—**“See how He loves us!”**



Voices from Church History

“[Mortals] say of some temporal suffering, ‘No future bliss can make up for it,’ not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.”²

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

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- The Jews saw Jesus weep, and they commented: *“See how he loved him!”* (John 11:36). Their read on the situation was Jesus wept because of Lazarus’s death, just as we weep at the death of a loved one. Perhaps they thought He wept because of a missed opportunity to save His friend from death, believing He had great power to heal.
 - Most likely, Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus, though not for the reasons the crowd assumed. John 11:33 says Jesus was moved in His spirit and troubled because He saw the grief of Mary and the crowd following her. He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, but for the moment, death still laid waste to loved ones left behind. So Jesus wept not just for the death of Lazarus but for the impact of death on all of humanity, both on those who die and on those left to pick up the pieces.
 - The curse of death that has entered the world through humankind’s sin against God is a great sorrow to the God-Man, Jesus. Why? Because He loves us. And because of Jesus’ death on the cross that defeated death not only for Lazarus but also for us, we can marvel about Jesus’ commitment to us—**“See how He loves us!”**
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some differences between Christians and the world in how they view death? (some view death as a natural process, but the Christian sees death as an enemy to be defeated one day; some view death as a permanent end, but the Christian believes death is temporary and one day will come to its own end; the world grieves death without hope for the one who has died, but Christians grieve as those with hope because of the promise of resurrection to eternal life for believers; tears for believers at death can be tears of joy because death means being with the Lord; death for those of other religions often comes with great uncertainty about their eternal destiny, but Christians have a sure hope in Jesus and the promises He has made for their eternal life)

Point 3: Jesus undoes the curse of death (John 11:41-44).

READ John 11:41-44 (DDG p. 41).

⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you heard me. ⁴² I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me.” ⁴³ After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 41) to show how Lazarus’s resurrection can serve as a metaphor for salvation.

Lazarus did not pep-talk himself out of that tomb. That would be absurd. He could do nothing to save himself—he was dead! He needed a resurrecting word from the Lord. This very real, historical, life-giving miracle, therefore, is a good metaphor for what happens to each of us when we pass from death to life, from darkness to light. We cannot save ourselves from the curse of death. We need Christ’s intervention. Praise God, then, that He sent Jesus, our resurrected Savior, who stands before the tombs of dead hearts and calls out in His powerful grace, “Come forth!”

Application: The problem with much that passes for Christianity in modern evangelicalism is that matters of faith and works and sin are treated as completely manageable in our own strength. We see this in every self-help book or sermon masquerading as Christian teaching. But what does the Bible say about the default spiritual state of humanity—is it light or darkness? Apart from Christ, it is utter darkness. We don’t sin without sorrow because we are spiritually handicapped; we sin without sorrow because we are spiritually *dead* (Eph. 2:1). We are not born with the light in us but rather an aversion to “the light of the world”—Jesus—because He exposes our wickedness (John 3:19; 8:12).

The situation the gospel means to address is not spiritually dysfunctional people who need a good “talking to.” Christianity is not about a set of aphorisms, life-hacks, or practical steps for more successful living. No, Christianity is fundamentally about *raising the dead*. Thus, the fundamental problem of humanity is impossible for human beings to solve—dead people cannot raise themselves. Only Jesus can call us out from the darkness of death into His marvelous light of eternal life (1 Pet. 2:9).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways people try to “save themselves” apart from faith in Jesus Christ? (through good works; through going to church; through adherence to other religions; self-help methods for addressing character shortfalls; trying to look the part of being “saved” to receive the affirmation of others; by changing what “saved” means)

EXPLAIN: Reference the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 41) as you address the ways the *raising* and *freeing* of Lazarus can serve as another metaphor for the experience of the Christian.

Jesus prayed that this miracle would solidify in people's hearts the clear connection between Him and the Father. When Lazarus stepped out from the tomb, who could doubt it? With a word, the shackles of the chains of death fell off Lazarus, just as he was unwrapped from his burial clothes and set free to live again. This provides yet another powerful metaphor: For those who have heard the Word of life and been born again in the Spirit, the chains of sin and death have fallen away—we are truly free (John 8:36).

- The *raising* of Lazarus is a beautiful picture of the new birth of any sinner transformed by grace. Freedom from death comes from the good news of Jesus. His power turns the dead into the living. And this freedom starts even now. It is not just a “ticket to heaven” when we die. It is the gift of eternal life at the moment of salvation. When we believe upon Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life, we become liberated then and there from the curse of sin and death.

Illustration: In the beginning, God created *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”). He then took the dust of the earth to form a human body and breathed the breath of life into him, creating the first human being (Gen. 2:7). Similarly, the God-Man uttered a life-giving word into the darkened tomb, “breathing” life into the decaying, dusty corpse of Lazarus.

- The *freeing* of Lazarus is a beautiful picture of every person born again in the Spirit. The chains are off; the cell door is open. When the Son sets us free, we are truly free (John 8:36). “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Application: Christian, Christ does not want you in your burial clothes. The raised are really free—free from sin and free from the law, which condemned us to death because of sin. Therefore, we should not return to the yoke of slavery to sin. Because we have been given eternal life in Christ, we glorify God always, even in sickness and in death, trusting in His power to raise us from the dead.

Gospel: This world is a hostile courtroom, to be sure. The enemy, the devil, is a skilled lawyer, and yes, there is more than enough evidence to convict you. But neither the world nor the devil occupies the mantle of judge. Rather, the judge is King Jesus, and He is the judge who comes down from the bench to take our place in the seat of the accused. He takes on all the guilt, takes all the punishment, and receives all the condemnation on His cross that justice against sin might be served yet the sinner go free. After making restitution for our transgressions by His blood, He ascended to His rightful place at the right hand of God, where He is our faithful advocate declaring, “No condemnation for those who believe in Me” (Rom. 8:1).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What will it look like to live free in Christ, free from the chains of sin and death? (no longer finding the sinful ways of the world more appealing than the purity of living for Jesus; sharing the gospel with the world regardless of the fears of what human beings may do to the messenger in response; an ongoing struggle through prayer and the strength of the Holy Spirit to resist temptation and give glory to Jesus Christ alone)

My Mission

EXPLAIN: Sometimes you hear people say that whether Christ was resurrected or not doesn't really matter. What matters, they suggest, is what you believe in your heart about it. The significance of Easter, the thinking goes, is metaphorical, wholly spiritual. But the Son of God did not put on metaphorical flesh. Nor did He die a metaphorical death. Because our individual deaths will be real, we need Jesus' death in our place to be real too. Because our bodies are going to die, we hope for a real resurrection. In Christ's death and resurrection, we see the depth of His real love for real people. The raising of Lazarus is a reminder that Jesus is not just Lord over our spiritual life but He is Lord over *real* life—all of life itself—as well as death itself.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 42), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have been given eternal life in Christ, we glorify God always, even in sickness and in death, trusting in His power to raise us from the dead.

- **How does the raising of Lazarus affect your thinking about death, grief, mourning, and eternal life?**
- **What are some practical ways your group can address physical needs in your community with the goal of proclaiming Christ, our resurrected Savior?**
- **Who do you know is facing or grieving death, and how will you help them see Jesus, the resurrection and the life, in faith?**



Voices from Church History

"I am the voice of life that wakens the dead. I am the good odor that takes away the foul odor. I am the voice of joy that takes away sorrow and grief ... I am the comfort of those who are in grief. Those who belong to me are given joy by me. I am the joy of the whole world. I gladden all my friends and rejoice with them. I am the bread of life."³

—Athanasius (c. 293-373)

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for calling our dead hearts to life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Your cross, You have obtained resurrection life for everyone who trusts in You. In dying, You conquered death by freeing us from sin's grasp; in rising, You carried us with You to Your Father's right hand where eternal pleasures reside. Help us to announce this good news to a world in constant grief over sin's destructive effects. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 43-45), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 46) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 43-45) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 46) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 43-45) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 1** as a part of point 1 in the session: **You can reasonably—and biblically—assume that Jesus allows difficult things to come into your life because He will get more glory, and you will become more like Him, than if those difficulties didn't come.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2:** "Jesus, as the ideal image-bearer, presents to us the right human response to death: He wept."
- **Day 5:** "To align with Christ—to receive His death and His life as our own—is to make yourself a target of those who hate God."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 46) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to look for ways they can speak into the lives of others about Jesus' power and authority over death.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: Jesus has authority over the curse of death (John 11:20-27).

“The raising of Lazarus is Jesus’s seventh and climactic messianic sign in John’s Gospel (see 2:11). This miracle (recorded only by John) anticipated Jesus’s own resurrection and revealed him as ‘the resurrection and the life’ (11:25). Resurrections are rare in the OT (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37; 13:21) and in the Gospels (Jesus’s raising of Jairus’s daughter, Mark 5:22-24,38-42; Jesus’s raising of the widow’s son at Nain, Luke 7:11-15). The raising of Lazarus served as the final event that triggered the Jewish leaders’ resolve to arrest Jesus and try him for blasphemy (John 11:45-57).”⁴

“Jesus . . . wanted to lead Martha into a still-deeper faith by stressing another important present reality. So he declared, *‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die’* (11:25-26a). This is the fifth of the seven ‘I am’ statements in John (see 6:35). In it Jesus promises that while those who believe in him experience physical death, in the ultimate sense they will ‘never die’ for Jesus gives them eternal life (see 8:51). Belief in Jesus makes all the difference between eternal life and death . . . Jesus followed his majestic assertion with a challenge to Martha: *‘Do you believe this?’* (11:26b). Martha, who had already expressed her confidence in Jesus’ special standing with God, did not hesitate to answer, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Martha could not have understood all the implications of what she was saying. Yet she acknowledged Jesus as *the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world* (11:27; see Matt. 16:16). This is the saving insight of which the whole gospel has been speaking. Martha was a believer who had been enlightened by the light of the world (8:12). She was another individual who recognized Jesus as the Messiah (see 1:41; 3:28; 4:29,42; 9:35-38).”⁵

Point 2: Jesus grieves the curse of death (John 11:32-37).

“[Jesus] comes then to the tomb and again curbed his emotions. Why does the Evangelist carefully mention in several places that ‘he wept’ and that ‘he groaned’? He mentions these so that you may learn that he had truly put on our nature. For while this Evangelist is remarkable for the great things he says about Christ more than the others in matters relating to the body, [at the passion] he also speaks much more humbly than they. For instance, he says nothing about Jesus’ sorrow concerning his death, while the other Evangelists declare that he was exceedingly sorrowful, that he was in fact in an agony. But John, on the contrary, says that he even threw the officers backwards. The result is that [John] here has made up for what is omitted there by mentioning his grief.”⁶

“Jesus identifies with us in our pain and loss . . . As God incarnate, Jesus shows us what he, as God, created man to be—a whole-hearted lover of God and a compassionate lover of fellow image-bearers—summarized in the two great commandments (Matt. 22:34-40). But as the incarnate God, Jesus’ tears in front of Lazarus’s tomb are of a different order. This is Jesus feeling the weight of the fall—the violation and disintegration of the way things were meant to be. His holy tears are those of the Creator grieving over the forfeiture of beauty through the intrusion of sin and death. Once again, in the incarnate Lord, we see the heart of the Lamb who would offer his life to overcome our sin and death.”⁷

Point 3: Jesus undoes the curse of death (John 11:41-44).

“Though Lazarus had not yet been raised, his resurrection was so certain that Jesus treated it as already done. He had confidence that his Father would always hear him, because he never asked for anything outside the will of the Father (11:42a). Their will was one. Jesus was certain that God wanted him to raise Lazarus. He then stated the purpose for this public prayer: *for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me* (11:42b). Jesus could have raised Lazarus without more ado, but he wanted those watching to realize that he did not operate independently . . . The shout was not for Lazarus’ benefit. He was dead and could hear nothing. Jesus could have raised him with a whisper. But Jesus wanted the living ones standing there to hear the resurrection words and the call to move from the sphere of death into the sphere of life . . . Truly, Jesus is the resurrection and the life.”⁸

“Lazarus comes out still ‘bound with bandages on his feet and hands, and his face wrapped in a cloth,’ so that Jesus has to give ‘the crowd standing around’ yet another command, ‘Loosen him, and let him go’ (v. 44). Despite the rich symbolism, this is a resuscitation, not a resurrection. Later, when Jesus himself is raised, the contrast will be self-evident, for the stone will be already ‘taken away from the tomb’ (20:1), Jesus’ body nowhere to be seen, and only ‘the linen cloths lying, and the cloth which had been over his face not with the linen cloths, but rolled up by itself in one place’ (20:7). The so-called ‘resurrection’ of Lazarus is but a sign of future resurrection (see 12:18), not the event itself. The promise to Martha that her brother ‘will rise’ still awaits ‘the resurrection at the last day’ (vv. 23-24). For the moment, Lazarus is not being ushered into the age to come, but simply received back into everyday life.”⁹

References

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4. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 1688, n. 11:1-57.
5. Pratap C. Gine and Jacob Cherian, “John,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1421-22.
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