SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Eleven, Verses 1–57

I Am the Resurrection and the Life — the seventh sign — a friend four days dead, a Savior who weeps, and a council that votes for His death

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Jesus lets His friend die, walks back into danger, weeps at the grave and calls a four-days-dead man out by name — and the very sign that gives Lazarus life sets the council on the road to taking His. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 11:1–57

delay · Martha · tears · tomb · council

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from "he whom You love is sick" to "they planned together to kill Him"

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"Jesus wept." — John 11:35

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 11:1–57

I Am the Resurrection and the Life — Love that waits, tears at a tomb, a dead man walking out — and the plot that leads to the cross

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 11 in 5 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 11:25–26

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

† Before the Passage

John 10 ended with Jesus out of reach of His enemies. At the Feast of Dedication they picked up stones again (10:31) and tried to seize Him, and "He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing" (10:40). That is where the messenger from Bethany finds Him. The disciples remember the stones (11:8); going back to Judea means walking into the danger they had just escaped. Thomas says it out loud: "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" (11:16).

This is the seventh and greatest of the signs John chose to record (20:30–31) — after Cana, the official's son, the lame man at Bethesda, the five thousand, the walk on the sea and the man born blind. It is also the hinge of the Gospel. Guzik calls it "perhaps the most remarkable miracle Jesus performed," and in John it is the last straw: the council meets because of it (11:47) and from that day plans His death (11:53). The sign that gives Lazarus life costs Jesus His.

Bethany lay on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, "near Jerusalem, about two miles off" (11:18) — fifteen stadia in the Greek. Mary and Martha appear in Luke 10:38–42 as well, Martha serving and Mary at His feet; John assumes his readers know Mary as the woman who anointed the Lord (11:2), a scene he will tell in 12:1–8. Jewish burial was on the day of death, in a cave or rock-cut tomb sealed with a stone, and mourning lasted for days with friends coming to console the family (11:19, 31).

The Old Testament hope of resurrection stands behind Martha's answer in verse 24: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake" (Daniel 12:2), and Isaiah 25:8 promised that the Lord "will swallow up death for all time." Jesus had already said, "an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth" (5:28). At Lazarus's tomb He gives a preview: one voice, one name, and a dead man comes forth.

I
MOVEMENT

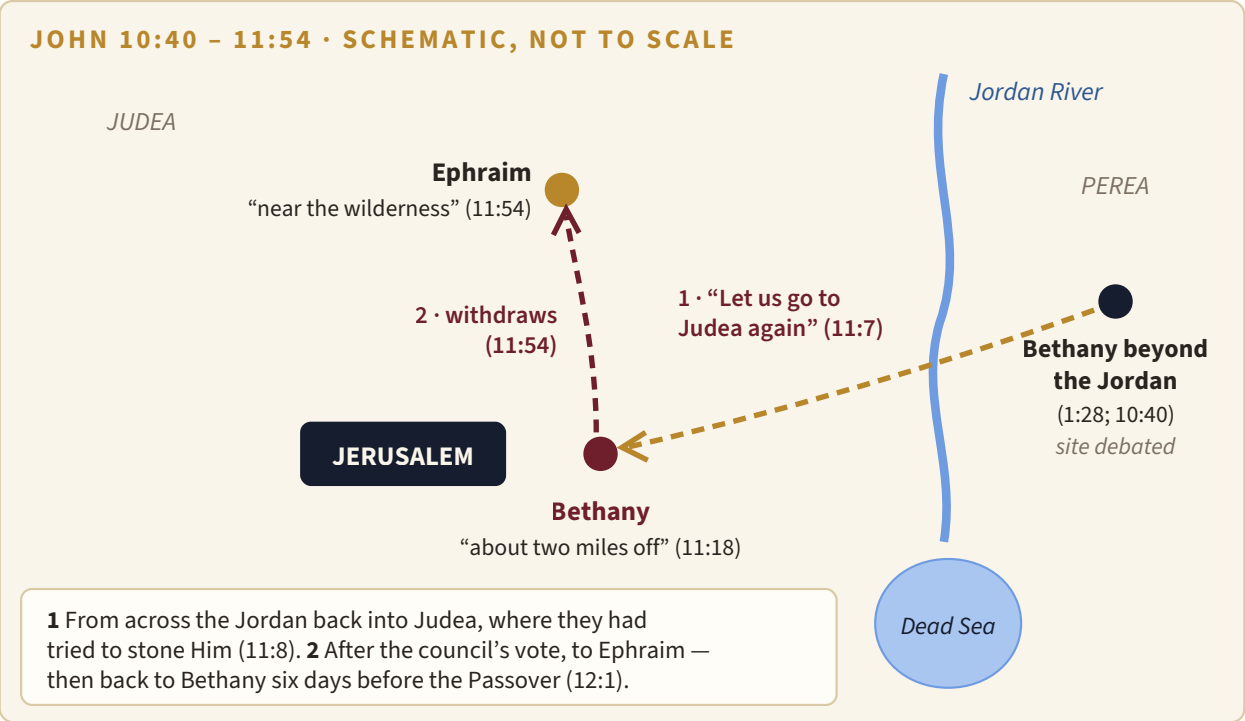
JOHN 11:1–16

He Whom You Love Is Sick

Love that waits two days — and a walk back into the danger zone

> [1] *Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.* [2] *It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.* [3] *So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, △ he whom You love is sick."* [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."* [5] *Now △ Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.* [6] *So when He heard that he was sick, 🕐 He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.* [7] *Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."* [8] *The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"* [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.* [10] *"But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."* [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."* [12] *The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."* [13] *Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.* [14] *So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,* [15] *and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may 🔁 believe; but let us go to him."* [16] *Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "🪦 Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."*
>
> JOHN 11:1–16

FIGURE · WHERE JOHN 11 HAPPENS



Follow the two journeys: back into Judea to a tomb two miles from Jerusalem, then away to Ephraim once the council has voted.

φιλεῖς … ἠγάπα

PHILEIS … ĒGAPA · "YOU LOVE … LOVED" · G5368, G25

The sisters' message uses *phileō* (v. 3), the warm word of friendship — "he whom You are fond of." John's own comment in verse 5 uses *agapaō*: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." The two verbs overlap in John (the crowd says "See how He loved him," *ephilei*, v. 36), so the point is not a ranking of loves but a fact on both sides: the family knew they were loved, and John says they were. Then the startling connective in verse 6: "*So* when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer." The delay is not in spite of the love; it is the way the love works.

κεκοίμηται

KEKOIMĒTAI · "HAS FALLEN ASLEEP" · G2837

From *koimaō*, to put to sleep; passive, to fall asleep — and figuratively, to die. The perfect tense means a settled state: Lazarus has fallen asleep and is asleep. Verse 11 sets it against *exypnisō*, "I may awaken him." The disciples hear only the literal sense (vv. 12–13), so Jesus says it "plainly" (*parrēsia*): "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). The New Testament keeps the sleep word for believers who die — "those who have fallen asleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14) — because sleep is something you wake up from. Our word "cemetery" comes from the related *koimētērion*, a sleeping place.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik opens by calling this "perhaps the most remarkable miracle Jesus performed." He notes the family's confidence in Jesus' love and Jesus' deliberate timing: "Lazarus was already dead when Jesus said this, but He knew the end result would be the glory of God, not death." The return to Judea is a choice made with open eyes — "Jesus was willing to go to Judea again – despite the warnings from His disciples," who remembered the stones. Thomas, often remembered only for doubting, speaks courage here; Guzik borrows Tasker's line that "Thomas utters a cry of loyal despair."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Preaching this text at St. Andrew's (February 2003), Sproul reads verse 4 as a statement about the deity of Christ: "the Father is glorified through the glory of His Son." Why wait two days? Jewish belief held that the spirit lingered near the body for about three days, so a fourth day put any talk of resuscitation out of reach: "Jesus lets enough time pass to make it absolutely certain." The twelve hours of daylight mean His appointed work is not yet finished — "The night of My soul has not yet come. I still have work to do." He notes that "sleep" for death is a rare euphemism in Scripture, and that Thomas was ready to follow Christ into danger while the others held back.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached verses 14–15 as "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad" (No. 585, 1864): Jesus was glad to be absent because He values His people's faith too highly to shield them from the trials that grow it. "Faith untried may be true faith, but it is sure to be little faith." "Trial plucks the arrow of faith from the repose of the quiver, and shoots it against the foe." The beloved family received a special trial and then a special visit: "The more beloved you are the more of the rod you shall have." In "Beloved, and Yet Afflicted" (No. 1518) he draws the lesson of verse 3: "In all trouble send a message to Jesus, and do not keep your misery to yourself."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notices that the sisters plead nothing but Christ's love — "he whom thou lovest" — and draws the rule: "Our greatest encouragements in prayer are fetched from God himself and from his grace." On the delay he gives the old proverb "that man's extremity is God's opportunity." Of the sleep language he writes, "It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more familiar and less formidable to us." And on the return to Judea: "Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it, and is with them."

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 11:17–27

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

Four days in the tomb — and Martha's "last day" brought into the present tense

> 17 *So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.* 18 *Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;* 19 *and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.* 20 *Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house.* 21 *Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.* 22 *"Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."* 23 *Jesus said to her, "Your*

> *brother will rise again.” [24] Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” [25] Jesus said to her, “△ I am the resurrection and the life; ☆ he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and ⟳ believes in Me ☆ will never die. Do you ⟳ believe this?” [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.”*
>
> JOHN 11:17–27

> *“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”*
>
> DANIEL 12:2

ἀνάστασις

ANASTASIS · “RESURRECTION” · G386

Literally a “standing up again,” from *anistēmi*, to stand up — the word Jesus uses in verse 23 (“Your brother will rise again,” *anastēsetai*) and Martha echoes in verse 24. It occurs forty-two times in the New Testament. Martha’s theology is correct — “in the resurrection on the last day” is the hope of Daniel 12:2 and of Jesus Himself (6:39–40, 44, 54). What Jesus corrects is the distance. He does not say “I bring” or “I will cause” the resurrection; He says *Egō eimi hē anastasis* — “I am the resurrection.” The fifth of John’s seven “I am” sayings puts the last day in a Person standing on the road.

ζωή

ZŌĒ · “LIFE” · G2222

John’s great word, used again and again in his Gospel: not mere biological existence (*bios*) but the life of God shared with men — “In Him was life” (1:4). Verses 25–26 are built in two matched lines: the believer who dies *will live* (resurrection), and the believer who lives *will never die* (*ou mē apothanē eis ton aiōna*, the strongest Greek negative: “will by no means die, ever”). The first line answers Lazarus in the tomb; the second answers Martha standing in front of Him. Then the question that turns doctrine into decision: “Do you believe this?”

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik stresses that Jesus does not merely possess resurrection and life; He is their source: “To know Jesus is to know resurrection and life; to have Jesus is to have resurrection and life.” He thinks Martha’s “even now” (v. 22) was not yet confidence that Jesus would raise her brother. On verse 26 he quotes Spurgeon — “Death cannot kill a believer, it can only usher him into a freer form of life” — and adds his own summary: “The believer will never die, but simply make an instant transition from an old life to a new life.”

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul asks whether Martha’s first words are a complaint, an accusation or a confession, and chooses faith — trust in Christ’s power and in God’s sovereignty. When she places the resurrection at the last day, Jesus redirects her to Himself: “I don’t just teach the resurrection.” He is its source and power, so in His presence it has already arrived. Sproul separates *thanatos*, biological death, from the *zōē* Christ gives: the believer has begun eternal life and cannot lose it, so “We are never going to die.” He counts Martha’s answer in verse 27 among the greatest confessions in Scripture.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In “Martha and Jesus” Spurgeon sees Martha as the picture of anxious believers: “They believe truly, but not with such confidence as to lay aside their care.” She shrank the promise four ways — into a general resurrection, into a familiar doctrine, into a distant future (“She set the promise in the remote distance”), and into something for other people. “We limit the words of the Holy One.” Jesus does not scold; He turns her to Himself — “‘I am,’ not ‘I can get the Resurrection.’” “This is the true way to cure despondency”: look to the Promiser, not to the difficulties around the promise.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes the comforters who came from Jerusalem (v. 19): “It is a mercy to have remembrancers when we are in sorrow.” Martha went out to meet Jesus while Mary sat still, and so, he says, when Christ comes to us “we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer to meet him.” The delay that tested them is God’s ordinary way: “Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet often come slowly.” And he presses the promise of verse 23 on every grieving reader: “Thy parent, thy child, thy yoke-fellow, shall rise again.”

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 11:28–37

Jesus Wept

Mary at His feet, mourners all around — and the Lord of life deeply moved at a grave

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.”* 29 *And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.* 30 *Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.* 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.* 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.”* 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,* 34 *and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”* 35 *Jesus wept.* 36 *So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!”* 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?”*

JOHN 11:28–37

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

HEBREWS 4:15

FIGURE · THE SEVEN SIGNS

THE SEVEN SIGNS JOHN CHOSE · JOHN 20:30–31

#	JOHN	THE SIGN	WHAT IT SHOWS · THE "I AM" BESIDE IT
1	2:1–11	Water into wine at Cana	*"manifested His glory" (2:11)*
2	4:46–54	The royal official's son	*healed from a distance*
3	5:1–9	The lame man at Bethesda	*ill thirty-eight years*
4	6:1–14	Five thousand fed	*"I am the bread of life" (6:35)*
5	6:16–21	Walking on the sea	*"It is I" (6:20)*
6	9:1–7	The man born blind	*"I am the Light of the world" (9:5)*
7	11:1–44	Lazarus raised	*"I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)*

"These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31).

John records seven signs; the seventh is the greatest, and three of them stand beside an "I am" saying that tells what the sign means.

ἐνεβριμήσατο

ENEBRIMĒSATO · "HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED" · G1690

Embrimaomai occurs only five times in the New Testament — twice here (vv. 33, 38) and three times of a stern warning or indignant rebuke (Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5). It was used of a horse snorting, and it carries indignation, not only sorrow — the KJV's "groaned." Verse 33 adds *etaraxen heauton*, literally "He troubled Himself" (the same *tarassō* of 12:27 and 13:21). Our teachers read the anger as aimed at death itself, the enemy He had come to destroy; others add the unbelief around Him. Either way, the Lord did not walk to this grave unmoved.

ἐδάκρυσεν

EDAKRYSEN · "WEPT" · G1145

Dakryō, to shed tears, appears only here in the New Testament. Mary and the mourners are *klaiontas* (v. 33), from *klaiō* (G2799), the loud lament of a Jewish funeral; Jesus *edakrysen* — quiet tears. The shortest verse in the English Bible (two words in English, three in Greek: *edakrysen ho Iēsous*) shows the One who in a moment will raise the dead still weeping with those who weep. The crowd reads it two ways: "See how He loved him!" and "Could not this man … ?" (vv. 36–37).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik contrasts the loud wailing of the mourners with Jesus' quiet tears; he quotes Morris: "Jesus did not wail loudly but He was deeply grieved." The tears are comfort — "God sees the tears of the grief stricken and is moved with compassion." But he presses the Greek of verse 33 further: the word points to anger, and "It means that Jesus wasn't so much sad at the scene surrounding the tomb of Lazarus" as indignant at death and what it does. He closes the section with Spurgeon's encouragement to follow wherever the Lord leads: "There cannot be any error in following where Jesus leads the way."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (February 2003) begins with the mourners who followed Mary: being present with grieving people matters more than finding the right words. Mary's words sound like "Lord, You're too late," but "God does not know how to be late" — though He often acts at the last possible moment. He reads the Greek as strong indignation: Jesus was angry at death, the enemy He would defeat at the cross, not at the people's lack of faith. And then He wept with them, though He knew He was about to raise Lazarus — compassion that does not wait for the problem to be solved before it grieves.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Jesus Wept" (June 1889) sees a storm in the Savior's soul — indignation at sin and death, grief for the bereaved, sorrow over unbelief — breaking out as tears rather than judgment. "He was love, and only love." The tears prove His real humanity, and He was not ashamed of them. They teach us to weep for others, and to keep our anger tender: "I like not lightning without rain, nor indignation without tears." "Let indignation have pity mixed with it." And tears are not the end: the One who wept then gave the order to roll away the stone.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry dwells on the phrase in verse 33: "He troubled himself; so the phrase is, very significantly" — His emotions were not forced on Him but taken up willingly. His weeping shows both His true humanity and His compassion, and it sets the pattern for us: "Tears of compassion well become Christians, and make them most to resemble Christ." Henry also looks deeper than the grave: "He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men."

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 11:38–44

Lazarus, Come Forth

The stone removed, a prayer said aloud, a loud voice — and a dead man walks out bound

38 *So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying*
against it. 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." 40 *Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if*
you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 *So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said,*
"Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 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." 43 *When He had said these things, He*

> *cried out with a loud voice, "△ Lazarus, come forth." 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."*
>
> JOHN 11:38–44

> *"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth,"*
>
> JOHN 5:28

δεῦρο ἔξω

DEURO EXŌ · "COME FORTH" · G1204

Literally "Here! Out!" — *deuro*, an adverb used as a command, "come here," and *exō*, "outside." No verb, no ceremony, three words in all: *Lazare, deuro exō*. Jesus "cried out with a loud voice" (*phōnē megalē ekraugasen*) — the verb is used of the crowd crying "Crucify!" (19:6, 15). The voice is aimed at one man, by name; John 5:28 says that one day "all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth." Bethany is a rehearsal.

κειρίαις

KEIRIAIS · "WRAPPINGS" · G2750

Keiria, a band or strip of cloth for binding a corpse, appears only here in the New Testament (KJV "graveclothes"). His face was wrapped with a *soudarion*, a face-cloth — the same word John uses for the face-cloth "rolled up in a place by itself" in the empty tomb of Jesus (20:7). The contrast is deliberate: Lazarus comes out still bound and needs others to unbind him; Jesus will rise and leave the wrappings behind. Then the command to the bystanders: *Lysate auton* — "Unbind him" — and "let him go."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

For Guzik this is combat: "Jesus fought death at Lazarus' tomb, and plundered the grave." He is careful with the category — "Lazarus was not resurrected, but resuscitated"; he would die again, while Jesus' resurrection is to a body that never dies. Of the loud voice he quotes Trench: it "means with John the loud decisive tone of authority." And he lingers on the grave-clothes with Spurgeon's line, "The man was wholly raised, but not wholly freed" — a picture of new believers who are alive but still need help getting loose.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul imagines how it would feel to hear Christ's reminder in verse 40, and draws the lesson: "it is easy to believe in God. But it is believing God that is the test of the Christian life." The prayer was spoken for the crowd, so they would believe the Father sent Him — not, he says, like preachers who address the congregation while pretending to pray. The command recalls God's creative word and the calming of the storm: "Jesus was noisy enough to wake the dead." The restoration was immediate and complete, and he applies the unbinding to all whom Christ calls out of spiritual death.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In “Unbinding Lazarus” (No. 1776, April 1884) Spurgeon notes that only Christ could raise the dead, but He let others do everything they could: moving the stone, loosing the cloths. “Our Lord Jesus is always economical with miracles” — Lazarus “can be released without a miracle, and therefore human hands must do it.” The scene is “a living man hampered with the grave-clothes of death!” — the new convert still bound by ignorance, fear, doubt and old habits. So the church must teach, comfort and help: “Jesus is glad to save sinners at all, but most of all glad to save them by the means of those already saved.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry says Jesus prayed aloud so that all would see He worked by the Father’s power, not the devil’s, “for prayer may preach.” The prayer is thanksgiving before the miracle, spoken as a Son — “Christ, as a Son, by authority.” The loud call pictures the gospel call to dead souls and the last trumpet; the miracle was immediate and complete. And Lazarus’s coming out of the cave carries a lesson: “the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened.”

V
MOVEMENT

JOHN 11:45–57

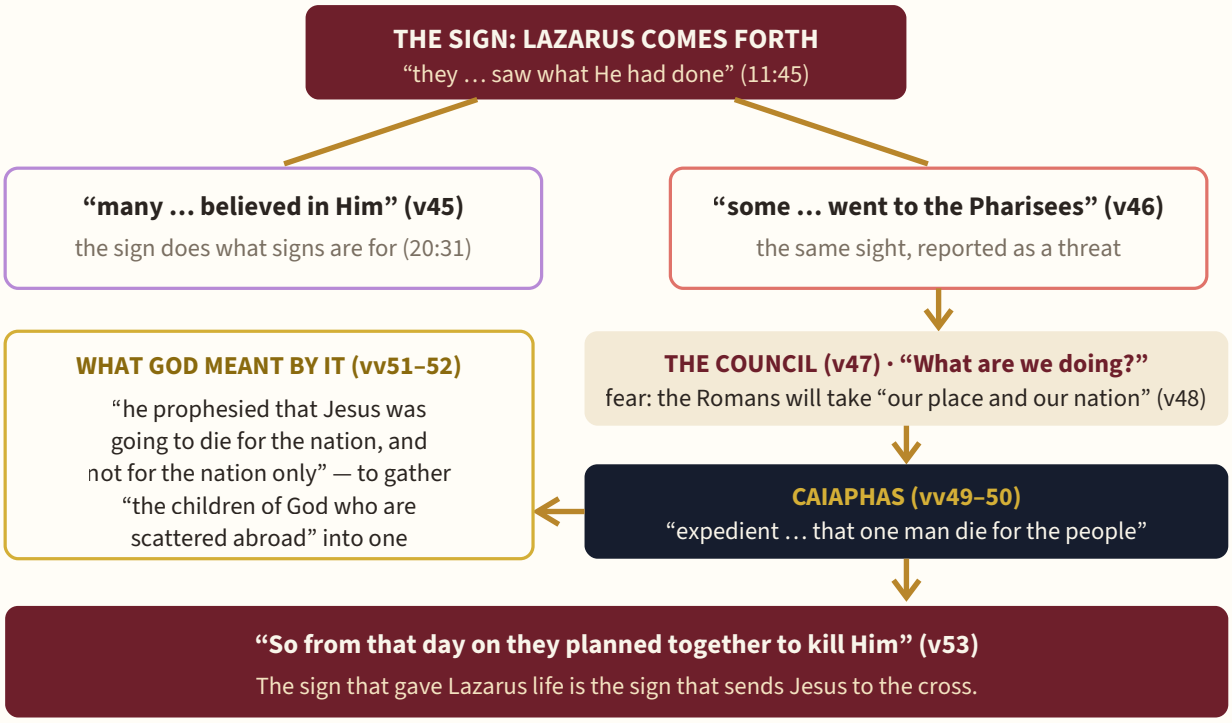
One Man for the People

Belief and betrayal, a council’s calculation — and a high priest who prophesied more than he knew

45 *Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.* 46 *But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.* 47 *Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.* 48 *“If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”* 49 *But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all,* 50 *nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”* 51 *Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,* 52 *and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* 53 *So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.* 54 *Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.* 55 *Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.* 56 *So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?”* 57 *Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.*

JOHN 11:45–57

FIGURE · ONE SIGN, TWO RESPONSES



Read down the right side to see how unbelief turns a resurrection into a death sentence — and across to the left to see what God meant by it.

συμφέρει

SYMPHEREI · "IT IS EXPEDIENT" · G4851

From *sympherō*, "to bring together," then "to be profitable, advantageous." Caiaphas's argument is pure cost-benefit: one life is a fair price for the nation's safety. John will repeat the line in 18:14 when Jesus stands before Caiaphas. Jesus uses the same verb in 16:7 — "it is to your advantage that I go away." The high priest meant political convenience; God meant substitution. Verse 51 says he "prophesied" (*eprophēteusen*) — not by his own initiative but "being high priest that year." And the reach goes beyond Israel: "not for the nation only," but to gather into one (*synagagē eis hen*) the scattered children of God — the one flock of 10:16.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's verdict on the high priest is crisp: "Caiaphas thought logically but not morally." He quotes Maclaren putting the council's reasoning in modern terms — "His life is a perpetual danger to our prerogatives. I vote for death!" — and Spurgeon, who called the informers of verse 46 guilty of "some of the meanest conduct that has ever been recorded in human history." Yet God turned the words into prophecy, and John widens them; with Morris: "Caiaphas's words are not big enough. John has a world-wide vision." From that day the plot is fixed, and Jesus withdraws to Ephraim until the Passover.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul titled this sermon "Expediency & Extravagance" (February 2003). The council asked what was expedient, not what was right, and Caiaphas was "the king of the first-century pragmatists." The sinless Christ was executed on pragmatic grounds: "It was expedient." Yet God can speak through unwilling mouths — "God can speak even through a donkey," he says, recalling Balaam — just as Pontius Pilate, who wanted no part in it, ended up named in the Apostles' Creed. The calculation of men became the counsel of God.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees two responses to one miracle: some believed, others went to the Pharisees with malice. The rulers dressed their envy in patriotism — "Pretended fears are often the colour of malicious designs" — and "The success of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries." Caiaphas's counsel was malicious in intent but prophetic in meaning: God overruled it to declare that Christ would die for His scattered children, Jews and Gentiles, and "his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love." Henry also reads Jesus' withdrawal to Ephraim as a judgment on Jerusalem, and a sign that His hour had not yet come.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the dust of Daniel 12 to the empty tomb — where John 11 reaches back and forward

"He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken."

ISAIAH 25:8

"Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight."

HOSEA 13:14

"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

JOHN 10:16

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:55

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14

> *“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; …”*
>
> REVELATION 21:4

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads Bethany as a preview, not the finished work: Lazarus was resuscitated and would die again, but Jesus “fought death at Lazarus’ tomb” — the same enemy He would defeat for good by His own resurrection.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears in the loud voice of verse 43 both the gospel call that wakes dead souls now and the voice that will raise all the dead at the last day.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one tomb. Guzik walks the scene and its emotions; Sproul argues from the details — the fourth day, the Greek of indignation, the pragmatism of Caiaphas; Spurgeon turns each moment into comfort for tried believers; Henry gathers Puritan proverbs for grieving people. They agree that Jesus' anger was aimed at death; Henry adds the sins of men, and none of them blames the mourners. Spurgeon has no sermon here on vv. 45–57.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Love and delay	The most remarkable miracle; Thomas's "cry of loyal despair."	Four days make death certain; the night of His soul has not yet come.	Faith untried is little faith; the beloved get more of the rod.	Plead His love; man's extremity is God's opportunity.
II · Resurrection and life	To have Jesus is to have resurrection and life.	"I don't just teach the resurrection"; thanatos is not zōē.	Martha set the promise at a distance; look to the Promiser.	Promised salvations come surely, but often slowly.
III · Jesus wept	Quiet tears, not wailing; anger at death itself.	God does not know how to be late; He grieves before He fixes.	No lightning without rain, no indignation without tears.	He troubled Himself; tears of compassion make us like Christ.
IV · Come forth	He plundered the grave; resuscitated, not resurrected.	Believing God, not just in God; noisy enough to wake the dead.	Economical with miracles: human hands must unbind.	Prayer may preach; the grave is no place for the quickened.
V · The council	Logical but not moral; John's world-wide vision.	The king of the pragmatists; God speaks even through a donkey.	— (no sermon found on this section)	Pretended fears cloak malice; God overruled the prophecy.

JOHN 11:1–57 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Love waited on purpose.** Verse 5 says Jesus loved them; verse 6 begins "So" — and He stayed two days. The delay was the shape the love took, not a lapse in it. THE TEXT
- **The fourth day closed every loophole.** Sproul: Jewish belief held the spirit lingered about three days; by the fourth, no one could call it a revival. "Jesus lets enough time pass to make it absolutely certain." SPROUL
- **Sleep is a word for waking up.** *Koimaō* (v. 11) is the New Testament's word for believers who die (1 Thess 4:14). Henry: call death by names that make it "less formidable to us." THE GREEK
- **Jesus brings the last day into the present tense.** Martha believed in the resurrection "on the last day"; Jesus said, "I am the resurrection." Spurgeon: "'I am,' not 'I can get the Resurrection.'" SPURGEON
- **He was angry before He wept.** *Embrimaomai* (vv. 33, 38) is indignation. Sproul and Guzik both read it as anger at death, the enemy He came to destroy. THE GREEK
- **God weeps before He fixes.** Jesus knew what He was about to do and still wept. Spurgeon: "I like not lightning without rain, nor indignation without tears." SPURGEON
- **Believing God is harder than believing in God.** Martha had confessed Him as the Christ (v. 27) and still balked at the stone (v. 39). Sproul: "it is believing God that is the test of the Christian life." SPROUL

- **Christ raises; we unbind.** Only Jesus could call Lazarus out; anyone could loosen the cloths. Spurgeon: "our Lord Jesus is always economical with miracles." SPURGEON
- **The same sign, two verdicts.** Many saw and believed (v. 45); some saw and reported (v. 46). Signs do not force faith; they reveal hearts. THE TEXT
- **A wicked man spoke a true word.** Caiaphas meant political convenience; God meant substitution — "one man die for the people." Guzik: "Caiaphas thought logically but not morally." GUZIK

† Questions for the Table

1 **Where has God's timing felt like neglect to me — a prayer for someone I love that seemed to go unanswered for "two days longer"?**

Verse 5 comes before verse 6: love first, then the delay.

11:5–6, 15; Rom 8:28

2 **Martha believed the right doctrine about the last day. Where do I keep Jesus' promises at a safe distance instead of letting Him say "I am" about my situation today?**

Spurgeon: she set the promise in the remote distance.

11:23–27

3 **Jesus wept with people He was about to help. Who around me is grieving, and what would it look like to be present before I try to fix anything?**

Sproul: being present matters more than finding the right words.

11:33–35; Rom 12:15

4 **What "stone" am I afraid to let Jesus remove because of what it might expose — the stench of something long dead?**

"Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

11:39–40

5 **Lazarus came out alive but still bound. What grave-clothes am I still wearing — and which brother has Jesus told to help unbind me (or me to help unbind)?**

Christ raises; human hands unbind.

11:44; Gal 6:1–2

6 **Caiaphas chose what was expedient over what was right. Where am I tempted to sacrifice the truth, or a person, to keep my place?**

"It was expedient" is the logic that crucified the Lord.

11:47–53

John 11 begins with a man sick and ends with a Savior marked for death. In between, Jesus waits, walks into danger, weeps at a grave, and calls a dead man out by name. The One who said "I am the resurrection and the life" is the One who went to the cross so that everyone who believes in Him will never die. Do you believe this?

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

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