

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

RISING OPPOSITION TO JESUS' MINISTRY, JOHN 5:1-12:50

INTRODUCTION

- A. Outline of the *Gospel of John* (1:1-4:42)
1. Prologue (1:1-18)
 2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
 3. Jesus' early ministry (2:1-4:54)
 4. Rising opposition to Jesus' ministry (5:1-12:50)
 - a. Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem (5:1-47)
 - b. Jesus' ministry in Galilee (6:1-7:9)
 - c. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (7:10-10:42)
 - d. The death and resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-57)
- B. Comments on John 11
- F. F. Bruce, *The signal for Jesus to leave his retreat in Transjordan and return to the main scene of action in Judaea was not long in coming. It took the form of a message from Bethany ...*
 - William Barclay, *In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' conversations always follow the same pattern. Jesus says something which sounds quite simple. His saying is misunderstood, and he goes on to explain more fully and unmistakably what he meant. So it is with his conversation with Nicodemus about being born again (John 3:3-8), and his conversation with the woman at the well about the water of life (John 4:10-15).*
 - Louis Barbieri, The events of chap. 11 occur sometime between the Feast of Dedication (December) and the crucifixion (April). *Although Jesus raised others to life (a widow's son, Lk 7:11-17; Jairus's daughter, Mt 9:18, 23-25), the raising of Lazarus became the last and most dramatic sign-miracle Jesus performed before His own death and resurrection.*
 - Thomas Constable, *Jesus had presented Himself as the Water of Life, the Bread of Life, and the Light of Life. Now He revealed Himself as "the Resurrection and the Life." This was the seventh and last of Jesus' miraculous signs that John recorded, and it was the most powerful revelation of His true identity. It shows Jesus' authority over humankind's greatest and last enemy: death (cf. 5:21, 25, 28).*
 - Grant Osborne, *The death and resurrection of Lazarus provides the perfect introduction to the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS, JOHN 11:1-57

- A. The death of Lazarus (1-16)
1. Jesus was informed that a close friend was ill (1-4)
 - a. Lazarus, who was ill, was the brother of Mary and Martha (1-3), ***Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."***
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) Luke 10:38-39, *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.*
 - b) John 12:3, *Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

2) Comments

- a) Grant Osborne, *They so far as we know never became leaders in the church but were ordinary followers whose home Jesus stayed in when he was in Jerusalem. They were probably a wealthy family, since Lazarus was laid in a wealthy person's tomb and Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus. Their home village, Bethany (not the same one as in 1:28), lay a couple miles east of Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. Jesus was actually resting in the other Bethany (10:40) when he received the bad news about Lazarus.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *The name Lazarus probably is a variant of Eleazar, meaning "God Helps." The Synoptic writers did not mention him, which is probably why John identified him as Mary and Martha's brother. These sisters appear in John's Gospel for the first time here, but they appear in all the Synoptics that preceded the fourth Gospel (cf. Matt. 26:6–12; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 10:38–42) ... John's further description of Mary (v. 2) alludes to the later event that he would narrate in 12:1–8 ... The title Lord (Gr. kyrie) was respectful, and did not necessarily imply belief in Jesus' deity. Obviously Jesus had considerable contact with Lazarus and his two sisters, so much so that the women could appeal to Jesus' affectionate love (Gr. phileis) for their brother when they urged Him to come. They also believed that Jesus could help their brother by healing him (cf. v. 21; Ps. 50:15). They must have realized that Jesus was in danger anywhere near Jerusalem (v. 8).*
- c) Edwin Blum, *This Mary ... was the same one who later (see John 12:1–10) poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair. However, John may be assuming that the original readers of his Gospel already had some knowledge of Mary (cf. Mark 14:3–9) ... The sisters assumed, because of the Lord's ability and His love for Lazarus, that He would immediately respond to their word about Lazarus' illness and come.*
- d) Kenneth Gangel, *Now the Lord revealed his power by reaching beyond this life and touching death and the afterlife—territory that belongs only to God ... Sometimes the Lord's ways are hard to understand. Imagine the disciples listening to Jesus as he observed casually that the sickness would not end in death and then lingering around for a few more days before heading to Bethany.*
- e) Leon Morris, *There is no request that Jesus should come to them. Doubtless the sisters were well aware of the dangers that would beset him if he were to visit them, and they do not ask him to imperil himself. Nevertheless their words are in effect a plea for help. Jesus was resourceful, and they look to him for aid without specifying ways and means ... they base their plea not on their brother's love or their own love for the Lord, but only on the Lord's love for their brother.*
- f) F. F. Bruce, *... three names (Mary, Martha, Lazarus) were found in 1873 in ossuary inscriptions in one tomb near Bethany.*

- b. Jesus gave encouraging words concerning Lazarus' condition (4), ***But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."***

1) Related verses

- a) John 9:3, *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*
- b) John 11:40, *Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Evidently Jesus spoke these words to the messenger who brought the news of Lazarus' death expecting that he would repeat them to Mary and Martha (cf. v. 40). Jesus meant that Lazarus would not die in the final sense, though his sickness did prove fatal. Lazarus' imminent death would give way to resurrection and the revelation of Jesus glorified as God's Son (cf. 9:3) ... this miracle not only displayed Jesus' identity as God's Son, but it also led to His death, which was the ultimate manifestation of His identity and glory.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *He waited till the right moment in the Father's plan. Lazarus' sickness would not end in death, that is, in permanent death. Instead Jesus would be glorified in this incident (cf. 9:3).*

- c) Mark Bailey, *The purposes of a sovereign God in suffering are seen in three specific accounts in John's Gospel. With the healing of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), Jesus taught that sin may be the cause of suffering and sickness. In healing the man born blind, Jesus stated that the reason for the man's blindness was neither his sin nor his parents' sin, but that the work of God might be shown (9:3). And Jesus intentionally delayed his arrival at Bethany so that he and his Father would be glorified when he raised Lazarus from the dead (11:4).*
- d) Kenneth Gangel, *Even as we read this passage, we wonder about God being glorified through sickness, the strong point of verse 4. Of course, God was glorified through Jesus' resurrection, but he was also glorified through his death. Any crisis that brings glory to God is good. If God is glorified in illness, it is good, as difficult as this is for our human minds to grasp ... How was God glorified in this life-and-death event? Certainly through the resurrection, but also in the death. The faith and hope that Lazarus's death evoked in the sisters occupies a significant portion of this chapter.*
- e) Leon Morris, *... it is likely that we should understand the glorification of the Son in two ways in the Johannine manner. Jesus was seen to be at one with the Father, and many came to believe on him (v. 45). But the true glory is in the cross, and this incident led right on to Calvary (v. 50).*
- f) William Hendriksen, *When the Son is glorified through the exhibition of his brilliant virtues in works of might and grace, the Father, too, is glorified. These two cannot be separated (10:30; then 5:23). And in order that this glory may shine forth most brilliantly Lazarus must first die (see on 11:6). The illness is for (in the interest of) the glory of God ... it is clear that he already knew exactly what was going to happen, namely, that Lazarus would die and that he would raise him.*
- g) William Barclay, *In the Fourth Gospel, it is clear that Jesus regarded the cross both as his supreme glory and as the way to glory. So when he said that the cure of Lazarus would glorify him, he was showing that he knew perfectly well that to go to Bethany and to cure Lazarus was to take a step which would end in the cross—as indeed it did ... With open eyes, Jesus accepted the cross to help his friend. He knew the cost of helping, and was well prepared to pay it.*
- h) F. F. Bruce, *The glory of God was to be demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus from death, so that while the illness resulted in temporary death, it resulted more impressively in resurrection and life.*

2. The interaction of Jesus with the disciples concerning Lazarus' condition (5-16)

- a. Jesus declared His love for that family but chose to wait before going to Lazarus (5-7), ***Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he 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."***

1) Related verses

- a) John 11:3, *So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."*
- b) John 7:8, *You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *John dispelled any doubt about Jesus' true love (Gr. agape) for this family. His delay did not show disinterest but divine purpose (cf. 2:4; 7:3–10). His delay in moving toward Jerusalem and His death was entirely self-determined (cf. 2:3–4; 7:3–9).*
- b) J. Vernon McGee, *Friend, sometimes He allows our loved ones to die. We need to recognize that He has a reason, and His ways are perfect. Jesus never moves by sentiment. That is what spoils people and that is how parents spoil their children. He is motivated by love, and that love is for the good of the individual and for the glory of God.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *What about our Lord's delay? He was not waiting for Lazarus to die, for he was already dead. The fact that the man had been dead four days gave greater authenticity to the miracle and greater opportunity for people to believe, including His own disciples (see John 11:15) ... 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.*

- d) Leon Morris, *Now John tells us that Jesus loved all three in the family ... The separate mention of the three persons is probably meant to put some stress on Jesus' affection for each one individually. He did not simply love the family. He loved Martha, he loved Mary, and he loved Lazarus. It may be that John has prefaced verse 6 with this note to make it clear that Jesus' failure to move immediately was not due to any lack of affection for the family ... The delay would certainly heighten the miracle, but we cannot think that Jesus made his friends suffer bereavement simply in order that he might perform a more spectacular miracle. It is much more probable that John wants us to see Jesus as moved by no external forces, but solely by his determination to do the will of God ... The double time note "then" and "after this" ... puts some emphasis on the delay. It was only after the two days that Jesus suggested action.*
- e) William Hendriksen, ... *what may have looked like cruel delay was in reality the tenderest concern for the spiritual welfare of true disciples. The ways of God are sometimes very strange! Moreover, the more faith was strengthened, so much the more the glory of God would be extolled!*
- f) William Barclay, *So often we would like Jesus to do things in our way; we must leave him to do them in his own way.*
- g) It is interesting to note that John uses one word for love in verse 3 and another in verse 5. In verse 3, the word is for brotherly love. Martha and Mary are speaking of Jesus' love for Lazarus. But in verse 5, Jesus uses the word for divine love. Jesus' love for us is beyond our natural ability to comprehend.
- b. The disciples were concerned for Jesus' safety (8), ***The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"***
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' decision to return to the Jerusalem area in Judea seemed foolhardy to the disciples, who reminded Him that the Jews there had recently tried to stone Him (10:31, 39). They obviously did not yet appreciate the Father's protection of His Son until His appointed hour, or the inevitability of Jesus' death.*
 - 2) Leon Morris, *The suggestion provokes an immediate protest. The disciples have not forgotten the Jews' attempt to stone Jesus (10:31), which they speak of as happening "now" ... The incident was vivid in their memory and they were fully alive to the danger. So they ask Jesus whether he is going back there again.*
 - 3) George Beasley-Murray, *Jesus calls on his disciples to accompany him to Judea. The disciples are aghast; so recently as the Festival of the Dedication had Jewish opponents tried to stone him (10:31, 39); how foolish then to risk his life again! And how needless, since Lazarus' illness is not "for death"!*
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *The fact that Jesus wants to return to Judea rather than just Bethany shows his coming passion is uppermost in his thoughts, and the raising of Lazarus is a preparatory event. The disciples are quite aware of the dangers and mention the attempt to stone Jesus ... The opposition was intensifying, and they were in grave danger.*
 - 5) F. F. Bruce, *The reference to the attempt to stone him is to the incident at the festival of Dedication, recorded in John 10:31, when Jesus' claim, "I and the Father are one," provoked this hostile reaction on the part of "the Jews" ... Why, the disciples asked, should he venture into the lions' den again? Could he not cure Lazarus from a distance?*
- c. Jesus explained why it was important to go (9-10), ***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."***
- 1) Related verse, Jeremiah 13:16, *Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) William Hendriksen, *For Jesus himself rebellion against the plan of his heavenly Father (which was also his own plan) was, of course, unthinkable. With the disciples it was different. They needed this instruction.*
 - b) George Beasley-Murray, ... *the application within the context is the necessity of the disciples to keep in his company, even though he does advance toward danger and death ...*

- c) F. F. Bruce, *The present words have an obvious surface meaning. Those who walk in the daytime do not stumble against obstacles because the light of the sun shows them where they are going, but people who go out in the dark are liable to stumble because they cannot see obstacles in their path. But there is a deeper meaning, where the true light of the world and not the light of this world is involved. One who shuts his eyes to the true light not only “has no light” but “the light is not in him.” The light of the sun shines from the sky; the true light shines within (cf. 1 John 2:8). In the present context, Jesus must follow the path of the Father’s will while life lasts. It may be the eleventh hour of daylight, but that is no reason for staying in retirement.*
 - d) Edwin Blum, *Jesus spoke in a veiled way to illustrate that it would not be too dangerous to go to Bethany. In one sense He was speaking of walking (living) in physical light or darkness. In the spiritual realm when one lives by the will of God he is safe. Living in the realm of evil is dangerous. As long as He followed God’s plan, no harm would come till the appointed time. Applied to people then, they should have responded to Jesus while He was in the world as its Light (cf. 1:4–7; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5). Soon He would be gone and so would this unique opportunity.*
 - e) Kenneth Gangel, *Verses 9 and 10 represent the Lord’s answer, though it does not seem to fit the context. Perhaps it was a proverb of the time, meaning duty is more important than haste. For Jews, the twelve hours of daylight would have been from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., and perhaps Jesus emphasized that we have a full twelve hours, but no more. Each valuable hour should be used to glorify God.*
 - f) Leon Morris, *He, like other people, must do his work while he has the opportunity (cf. 9:4–5). But in view of his repeated statement that he is “the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5) we should probably discern a deeper meaning, in the Johannine manner. People should make the most of the presence of Christ, the Light of the world, for when he is withdrawn from them there is no possibility of their “walking” without stumbling ... There will also be the thought that to be with him is to be in the light, and the next verse brings out the reverse—if they are away from him they will certainly stumble in the darkness ... When there is darkness in the soul, then we will stumble indeed.*
 - g) Louis Barbieri, *Verse 10 is difficult, but Jesus appears to have meant that eventually His time for ministry will run out and He will face “the night” of His betrayal and crucifixion, a time of great distress for Him that parallels when one walks around at night without light available to him (the sense of the light is not in him). Jesus comforted His disciples by asserting that His ministry was not yet over, but reaffirmed that it would be some day.*
 - h) Grant Osborne, *The spiritual thrust is that Jesus the “light of the world” (8:12) illuminates this world of darkness with the light of God (1:4, 7, 9). There is only a short time left before the darkness takes over and he faces the cross. There is little time left, and he has to use it carefully to do the work of his Father while he can.*
- d. Jesus explained Lazarus’ condition to the disciples (11-13), **After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” 12 The disciples 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 meant taking rest in sleep.**
- 1) Related verses
 - a) Daniel 12:2, *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*
 - b) Matthew 27:52, *The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,*

2) Comments

- a) Kenneth Gangel, *Jesus returned to the subject at hand and used a common New Testament euphemism for death—the word sleep (Matt. 9:24; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:14) ... That sleep, of course, does not mean cessation of existence or awareness, because we learn later in Paul’s writings that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1–10) ...*
 - b) William Hendriksen, *Jesus now reveals the purpose of his plan to go to Judea. It has to do with Lazarus. The Lord calls the brother of Mary and Martha our friend Lazarus. From this the disciples can infer that it was not lack of love which caused Jesus to permit Lazarus’ death ... In the case of Lazarus the figure is still more striking: as a man rises from sleep, so Lazarus was about to rise again from death ... The passages which speak of believers falling asleep do not teach an intermediate state of unconscious repose ... Though the soul is asleep to the world which it has left (Job 7:9, 10; Is. 63:16; Eccl. 9:6) it is awake with respect to its own world (Luke 16:19–31; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21–23; Rev. 7:15–17; 20:4).*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Jesus’ mention of sleep here should have reminded the disciples of Daniel 12:2 ... It should have led them to ask: Are You going to do what Daniel wrote that God will do in the future? ... Even though the disciples apparently failed to make this connection at the time, afterward they, and the readers of this account, could see that Jesus was claiming to do what God promised to do thereby signifying that He was God.*
 - d) Edwin Blum, *... if Lazarus had not died, the disciples (and readers of all ages) would not have had this unique opportunity to have their faith quickened.*
 - e) Warren Wiersbe, *He did not say He was glad that His friend died, but that He was glad He had not been there; for now He could reveal to His disciples His mighty power. The result would be glory to God and the strengthening of their faith.*
 - f) Leon Morris, *In passing it is worth noticing that few things illustrate more graphically the difference the coming of Christ made than this. Throughout the ancient world the fear of death was universal. Death was a grim adversary that everyone feared and no one could defeat. But Jesus’ resurrection altered all that for his followers. For them death was no longer a hateful foe that could not be resisted ... Of course this development was as yet future. But in the words of Jesus we find the manner of speaking that was to become characteristic of his followers ... The disciples think not of death but of natural sleep, and they affirm that if Lazarus is sleeping that is a good sign. “He will get better.” They were probably all the more ready to reach this conclusion because it removed the necessity for the dangerous journey into Judea ... John makes the situation clear. Jesus has spoken of Lazarus’s death.*
- e. He then revealed to the disciples why He waited (14-15), **Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, 15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”**
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Apparently Jesus was glad that He had not been present when Lazarus died because the disciples would learn a strong lesson from his resurrection that would increase their faith. The sign that Lazarus’ death made possible would be the clearest demonstration of Jesus’ identity so far, and would convince many people that He was God’s Son.*
 - 2) B. F. Westcott, *The disciples did already believe in one sense (ii. 11, vi. 69). But each new trial offers scope for the growth of faith. So that which is potential becomes real. Faith can neither be stationary nor complete.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *Therefore Jesus removes their uncertainty and says plainly, “Lazarus is dead” ... This statement of Jesus implies supernatural knowledge (see on 4:18). The messengers had spoken only of illness, and there was no other human source of information ... Now he says that his joy is for the disciples, “so that you may believe” (cf. vv. 42, 45, and 48). The aorist tense used here would naturally indicate the beginning of faith, and this is curious in the case of the disciples who had so trusted Jesus that they left all they had to follow him. Without a doubt they were already “believers.” Yet their faith was not strong, for at the critical hour they were all to forsake him. The meaning will be that faith is progressive. There are new depths of faith to be plumbed, new heights of faith to be scaled. The raising of Lazarus will have a profound effect on them and give their faith a content that it did not have before.*

- 4) William Hendriksen, *Had Jesus been present, a healing miracle would have been expected of him; but, as pointed out previously (see on 11:5, 6), the raising of a dead man would naturally be a more effective means of strengthening faith than the healing of a sick man. It is for this reason that Jesus said, "... and for your sake, that you may believe, I am glad that I was not present."* Since the miracle which is going to be performed is (among other things) for the benefit of the disciples, it is not surprising that Jesus says, "But let us go to him."
 - 5) George Beasley-Murray, *Having spoken plainly, Jesus expresses his gladness that he was not with Lazarus. His disciples are manifestly unprepared to endure the shock of faith that lies ahead of them; the awakening of Lazarus from his death will grant them a fresh vision of his glory, and after their trial enable them to grasp the meaning of it all.*
 - 6) Grant Osborne, *It must have been confusing to hear Jesus say he was "glad" that he wasn't present when Lazarus was dying. Yet as with the blind man in 9:3 there were larger issues at stake. God had orchestrated the events "for your sake"; first, "for God's glory" (11:4), and second, "so that you may believe" (v. 15). If Jesus had been there, it would have been another healing miracle. But now it will be a powerful raising from the dead, proving his authority to give life (5:21, 25–26). Their faith was growing, and this would be a significant step forward.*
 - 7) William Barclay, *The death of Lazarus brought a crisis to Jesus, and he was glad, because it gave him the opportunity to demonstrate in the most amazing way what God can do. For us, every crisis should be equally an opportunity.*
- f. Thomas encouraged the disciples go with Jesus (16), ***So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 20:24, *Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.*
 - b) John 21:2, *Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.*
 - c) John 13:37, *Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *This is the first reference in the Gospels to Thomas saying something. John described this member of the Twelve (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) further as the one called the Twin ... We do not know for sure who Thomas' twin brother or sister may have been ... Most Christians tend to think of Thomas as a doubter, because of His unwillingness to believe in Jesus' resurrection later (20:24–29). However, here his devotion to Jesus and his courage stand out. He did not understand how safe or unsafe the disciples would be, going up to Bethany, since they were with Jesus, who was walking in obedience to His Father (vv. 9–10). Neither did Thomas understand that the death that Jesus would die was a death that His disciples could not readily participate in with Him—at least not yet (cf. 1:29, 36). Nevertheless he spoke better than he knew.*
 - b) Warren Wiersbe, *Thomas was a doubting man, but we must confess that he was a devoted man: he was willing to go with Jesus into danger and risk his own life. We may not admire his faith, but we can certainly applaud his loyalty and courage.*
 - c) Leon Morris, *It is somewhat curious to find Thomas taking the lead. He is not usually the spokesman for the Twelve, but here he takes the initiative ... Thomas is usually known to us as the doubter. It is good accordingly to see this act of leadership and courage. In a way it fits his doubting, for it is a gloomy saying and not marked by any abundance of faith. In a sense, too, it expressed more than Thomas (or the others for that matter) could perform. When it came to the point Thomas like all the others forsook Jesus and ran away. Nevertheless we should not overlook these brave words. Thomas looked death in the face and chose death with Jesus rather than life without him.*
 - d) Merrill Tenney, *Thomas' loyalty is revealed by his readiness to share Jesus' peril. The skepticism that Thomas later evinced regarding the Resurrection was probably prompted by grief over Jesus' death rather than by disillusionment because of apparent failure ...*

- e) William Hendriksen, ... *how often does it not happen that a person's intentions are better than his actions? Thomas was probably very sincere in his intention to die with his Lord, but his courage failed him when death actually seemed to threaten. And may it not be safely assumed that Peter, too, was sincere when he affirmed with vehemence that he would never deny the Master? Nevertheless, we know what happened!*
- f) George Beasley-Murray, *Thomas summons his fellow disciples to accompany Jesus and die with him. An utterance of blind devotion, it expresses more than he realizes: for Jesus the journey will be for death, but one that will mean life for the world; and the Church that arises through the death and resurrection of Jesus is called to make the journey like its Lord, bearing a cross and revealing thereby the life that conquers death (cf. Mark 8:34; 2 Cor 4:10). The summons of Thomas accordingly is addressed to every reader of the Gospel.*
- g) William Barclay, *That is the highest form of courage. It does not mean not being afraid. If we are not afraid, it is the easiest thing in the world to do a thing. Real courage means being perfectly aware of the worst that can happen, being sickeningly afraid of it, and yet doing the right thing. That was what Thomas was like that day. We need never be ashamed of being afraid; but we may well be ashamed of allowing our fear to stop us doing what in our heart of hearts we know we ought to do.*

B. Jesus' meeting with Martha (17-27)

1. Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus (17), **Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.**

- a. Related verse, John 11:39, *Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."*
- b. Comments
 - 1) Edwin Blum, *Since Palestine is warm and decomposition sets in quickly, a person was usually buried the same day he died ...*
 - 2) Alfred Edersheim, ... *it was the practice to visit the grave, especially during the first three days.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *There was a Jewish belief that the soul stays near the grave for three days, hoping to be able to return to the body. But on the fourth day it sees decomposition setting in and leaves it finally. If this view was as early as the time of which we are thinking (it is attested c. A.D. 220 but is probably a good deal earlier) it will mean that a time had been reached when the only hope for Lazarus was a divine act of power.*
 - 4) Louis Barbieri, *Even the most petty, resistant fault finder would be challenged by Jesus, the resurrection and the life, who could raise a dead person to new life even after his body had begun to decay in the grave.*

2. Many Jews were there to console Martha and Mary (18-19), **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.**

- a. Related verses
 - 1) John 11:31, *When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*
 - 2) Job 2:11, *Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.*
- b. Comments
 - 1) Edwin Blum, *The fact that Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem points up two things. It explains why many Jews from Jerusalem were at the scene of this great miracle (vv. 45-46). It also prepares the reader for the coming climax which was to take place in the great city.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *John implied that many family friends came from Jerusalem in order to console Mary and Martha. Prolonged grieving that often lasted several days was customary in the ancient Near East. Therefore many people from Jerusalem either witnessed or heard about Jesus' miracle.*

- 3) Kenneth Gangel, *In the cultural ostentation of Jewish funerals, the mourners, the spices, and the procession still lingered. This was a popular family in the small town of Bethany, so Lazarus's funeral was a major event. But none of the Lord's followers—not the disciples and not the sisters—yet understood how Jesus is our life ...*
 - 4) William Barclay, *Respect for the dead and sympathy for the mourner were an essential part of Jewish duty. As the mourners left the tomb, they turned and said: 'Depart in peace,' and they never mentioned the name of the one who had died without invoking a blessing on it. There is something very lovely in the way in which the Jews stressed the duty of showing sympathy to the mourner.*
 - 5) Leon Morris, *At the funeral itself the mourners were left alone with their sorrow and their friends refrained from speaking to them. But later it was expected that visits for consolation would be made, and the Jews rated this duty highly.*
 - 6) William Hendriksen, *From the fact that Martha and Mary were disciples of Jesus it must not be inferred that the Jews who had come to pay their respects were all friendly to the Lord. Fact is that before the occurrence of this miracle these Jews were critical of Jesus, and did not believe in him in any sense. Many changed their attitude after seeing the miracle. Some, however, persisted in their unbelief, which broke out into open and determined hostility. Such is the picture as the evangelist himself draws it (11:36, 37, 42, 45, 46).*
3. Martha went to Jesus (20), ***So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.***
- a. Related verse, Luke 10:38-39, *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Grant Osborne, *As Jesus neared Jerusalem, Martha rushed out to meet him, while Mary stayed with the other mourners. This was a slight breach of custom, as the family was expected to "sit shiva" (meaning "seven days" of mourning), waiting for arrivals, as Mary did.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *This picture of Martha as the activist, and Mary as the more passive of the two sisters, harmonizes with Luke's presentation of them (Luke 10:38-42).*
 - 3) Gerald Borchert, *The custom was for the bereaved to remain seated in the house and for the guests to come and sit in silence and periodically support the grieving parties with sympathetic tears and moans ... one must not forget that it was the brother (the obvious wage-earner of that home) who had died. The loss was an intense one. Reading again Ruth 1:6-14 will provide some sense of the feelings that probably were present in that room ...*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *A call to Martha may have gone unrecorded, but it is perhaps more likely that Martha heard that he was near, and that was enough for this busy, active lady. It would be natural for anyone giving information to give it first to Martha, as the mistress of the household. Clearly she was the one who was likely to take the initiative, especially in the duties of hospitality.*
4. Her encounter with Jesus (21-22), ***Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."***
- a. Related verses
 - 1) John 11:32, *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*
 - 2) John 11:37, *But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Martha addressed Jesus respectfully, but probably not reverentially, as “Lord.” Some readers of the story have interpreted verse 21 as containing a rebuke, but Martha’s words there do not necessarily imply criticism. They at least express Martha’s great grief and her confidence in Jesus’ power to heal people. In view of verses 24 and 39, verse 22 probably does not mean that Martha believed that Jesus could raise Lazarus back to life than and there ... More likely Martha was reaffirming her personal confidence in Jesus that her severe loss had not shaken ... Her words probably do, however, reveal that she believed that Jesus’ power was limited by distance. And yet, Jesus had healed both a centurion’s servant and a nobleman’s son at a distance by His spoken word.*
- 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Martha recited the standard Old Testament view of the resurrection, not practicing the promises Jesus had taught so often. Surely she knew about the resurrection of the widow’s son and Jairus’s daughter, but somehow she never made the connection that the Lord could do the same for her brother.*
- 3) Leon Morris, *Martha’s greeting is an expression of faith: had Jesus been present her brother would not have died. In the story in Luke Martha rebuked Jesus because he did not tell Mary to help her with the housework, and some hear an implied rebuke here, too. Why had Jesus not been there when he was needed? ... Her remark probably expresses regret rather than rebuke. It may well echo what she and Mary had often said to one another (cf. v. 32) during the past few days ... When Jesus commanded that the stone be taken away from the tomb it was Martha who objected in the strongest of terms (v. 39). Her attitude there is so clear that it seems impossible to reconcile it with any real hope of a resurrection here. The words may be an expression of faith to make up for any lack of warmth in the previous verse.*
- 4) William Hendriksen, *In the heart of Martha the darkness of grief and the light of hope were engaged in deadly combat. Sometimes her lips gave expression to her near-despair; then again to her optimism ... Here is a woman, deeply emotional. Her soul is overcome by grief over the death of a brother whom she loved very dearly. But, here is also a disciple of Jesus, her soul filled with reverence for her Lord. Here is, consequently, a heart, stirred to its very depths, and swaying between grief and hope.*
- 5) William Barclay, *Here is one of the most human speeches in all the Bible, for Martha spoke, half with a reproach that she could not keep back, and half with a faith that nothing could shake. ‘If you had been here,’ she said, ‘my brother would not have died.’ Through the words, we read her mind. Martha would have liked to say: ‘When you got our message, why didn’t you come at once? And now you have left it too late.’ No sooner are the words out than there follow the words of faith, faith which defied the facts and defied experience: ‘Even yet,’ she said with a kind of desperate hope, ‘even yet, I know that God will give you whatever you ask.’*
- 6) F. F. Bruce, *Martha uses the language of faith. If Jesus had been there at the time, Lazarus would not have died. This is not a complaint; it is an expression of her faith in Jesus’ power. It is the same faith that finds voice in her assurance that God will grant Jesus whatever request he makes.*

5. Jesus’ interaction with Martha (23-27)

- a. They discuss the resurrection of Lazarus (23-24), **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.”**

1) Related verses

- a) John 11:39, *Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”*
- b) John 5:29, *and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*
- c) Luke 14:14, *and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *His words had an obvious literal meaning, but they were truer than anyone present realized at the moment. This is typical of John's ironical style, in which he used words with two meanings. Jesus offered Martha comfort, based on the Old Testament assurance that God would resurrect believers (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; cf. John 5:28–29). Martha, like the Pharisees, believed this Old Testament revelation, though the Sadducees did not (cf. Acts 23:7–8). The "last day" refers to the end of the present age as the Jews viewed history, namely, just before Messiah would inaugurate the new kingdom age (cf. 6:39–40, 44, 54; 12:48).*
- b) Edwin Blum, *Your brother will rise again. Since the word "again" is not in the Greek it is better to omit it in the translation. This promise sets the stage for Jesus' conversation with Martha. She had no thought of an immediate resuscitation but she did believe in the final resurrection at the last day.*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *It is important to note that Jesus did not deny what Martha said about the future resurrection. The resurrection of the human body is a cardinal doctrine in the orthodox Jewish faith.*
- d) Kenneth Gangel, *Martha could never have accepted the view of the Sadducees that denied the resurrection; she sided with the more conservative Pharisaic view that prevailed among the common people. Martha had no more hope than she had before Jesus arrived on the scene. But that was about to change—dramatically.*
- e) Leon Morris, *Jesus turns Martha's thoughts to resurrection: Lazarus will rise. The words could be taken as a general reference to the final resurrection, for Jesus does not mention his own part, nor that the rising is imminent ... Martha unhesitatingly takes the words to refer to the final resurrection at the end of the age. Her words show that she had no idea of an immediate raising of Lazarus to life, but they do represent a certainty about the resurrection at the last day. Many commentators think that they also show that she thought of Jesus' words as a commonplace of consolation, as the sort of thing others had doubtless been saying to her frequently, and in which she found but cold comfort. Be that as it may, her words open the way for one of the great declarations of Jesus that mark this Gospel.*
- f) Grant Osborne, *Jesus responds to this partly developed faith by affirming, "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23), which for him meant very soon and to Martha meant someday in the future, which Martha shows when she replies, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" ... After the destruction of Jerusalem, belief in resurrection and afterlife became the official Jewish view. Martha centers on this and does not realize Jesus is promising something much more immediate.*
- g) Charles Swindoll, *This is the abundant life Jesus had promised His followers (10:10); it is eternal and incorruptible. We do not have to wait, however, until the "last day" to begin receiving this abundant life. We can receive it and enjoy it now. That's because the "abundant life"—eternal, incorruptible, transforming life—is not a special kind of energy or a commodity somehow transferred from God to an individual. This resurrection life is a person: Jesus.*
- h) William Barclay, *One of the strangest things in Scripture is the fact that the saints of the Old Testament had practically no belief in any real life after death. In the early days, the Hebrews believed that the soul of every person, good and bad alike, went to Sheol. Sheol is wrongly translated as hell; for it was not a place of torture, it was the land of the shades. All alike went there and they lived a vague, shadowy, strengthless, joyless, ghostly kind of life. This is the belief of by far the greater part of the Old Testament. 'For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise?' (Psalm 6:5). 'What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?' (Psalm 30:9). The psalmist speaks of 'the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand' (Psalm 88:5). Also, note Psalm 88:11-12, Psalm 115:17, Psalm 115:17, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Isaiah 38:18.*
- i) F. F. Bruce, *Martha's answer was one of intelligence and faith, and it called forth from Jesus a further assurance, which went beyond the accepted belief in the resurrection of the dead.*

- b. Jesus declared that He is the resurrection and the life (25-26a), **Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.**

1) Related verses

- a) John 5:21, *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*
- b) John 6:40, *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*
- c) 1 Corinthians 15:21, *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.*
- d) John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
- e) John 12:25, *Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*
- f) John 3:36, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
- g) John 6:51, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus proceeded to make another of His “I am” claims. He meant that He would personally affect resurrection and provide eternal life (cf. 5:21, 25–29). He wanted Martha to think about the Person who would do the resurrecting rather than the event itself. Jesus’ own power raises people to life, just as Jesus’ own Person satisfies people spiritually like bread satisfies physically. He Himself is, therefore, the essential element in resurrection. Without Him there is no resurrection or life. This was really a double claim. Jesus meant that He is “the resurrection” (overcomer of death), and that He is also “the life” (sustainer of life) ... Whoever believes in Jesus will live spiritually and eternally, even if he or she dies physically (cf. 5:21) ... Whereas He will cause resurrection after death, for those who believe and die physically, He bestows eternal life during one’s earthly lifetime. It begins for the believer at salvation, before he or she dies physically ... Furthermore, every living person who believes in Jesus will never experience eternal (spiritual) death (cf. 8:51; Rev. 20:6). This is another promise of salvation, but it is also a promise of eternal security.*
- b) Edwin Blum, *A believer’s death issues in new life. In fact, the life of a believer is of such a quality that he will never die spiritually. He has eternal life (3:16; 5:24; 10:28), and the end of physical life is only a sleep for his body until the resurrection unto life. At death the spiritual part of a believer, his soul, goes to be with the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6, 8; Phil. 1:23).*
- c) Warren Wiersbe, *... perhaps the greatest transformation Jesus performed was to move the doctrine of the resurrection out of the future and into the present. Martha was looking to the future, knowing that Lazarus would rise again and she would see him. Her friends were looking to the past and saying, “He could have prevented Lazarus from dying!” (John 11:37) But Jesus tried to center their attention on the present: wherever He is, God’s resurrection power is available now (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10).*
- d) Leon Morris, *For the heathen or the unbeliever death may be thought of as the end. Not so for those who believe in Christ. They may die in the sense that they pass through the door we call physical death, but they will not die in the fuller sense. Death for them is but the gateway to further life and fellowship with God ... It means that the moment we put our trust in Jesus we begin to experience that life of the age to come which cannot be touched by death ... Everyone who lives and believes on Jesus (one article ties the two closely together; life and faith must be understood in the closest of connections) will never die. Jesus does not, of course, mean that the believer will not die physically ... He means rather that believers will not die in the sense in which death has eternal significance. They will not die in the age to come. They have eternal life, the life of the age to come.*

- e) William Hendriksen, *Note the order: first resurrection, then life; because resurrection opens the gate to immortal life ... Jesus is the resurrection and the life in person (see on 1:3, 4), the full, blessed life of God, all his glorious attributes: omniscience, wisdom, omnipotence, love, holiness, etc. As such he is also the cause, source, or fountain of the believers' glorious resurrection and of their everlasting life. Because he lives we too shall live. With him removed, nothing but death is left. With him present, resurrection and life is assured. The Prince of life is ever the conqueror of death. Not only is he this by and by in the resurrection on the last day; he is this always. That is exactly the truth which Martha failed to grasp.*
 - f) George Beasley-Murray, *The revelation to Martha thus is an assurance of resurrection to the kingdom of God in its consummation through him who is the Resurrection, and of life in the kingdom of God in the present time through him who is the Life. Both aspects of the "life" are rooted in the understanding of Jesus as the Mediator of the divine sovereignty in the present and in the future, whose mediatorial work in earthly ministry reaches its climax in his death and exaltation to the throne of God, whereby the sovereignty of God is established in redemptive power for all humanity and the Spirit of the age to come is released for the world.*
 - g) Grant Osborne, *For the Jesus follower death is not an end but a transition, a path to life eternal in heaven. Life inheres in Jesus, and we attain it by belief in him. Life for the believer is actually eternal life as a present possession, giving way in the end to ongoing life with Christ in heaven. Here the two are combined, as Lazarus will be raised from the dead now and not just "at the last day."*
 - h) F. F. Bruce, *Mortal life must come to an end; the life that is life indeed endures for ever. Here is an anticipation of the promise to be given in the upper room: "because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19).*
- c. Martha proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (26b-27), ***Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) John 20:31, *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
 - b) 1 John 5:1, *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.*
 - c) 1 John 5:5, *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *Jesus then asked Martha to affirm her faith in Him as the One who will raise the dead and who now gives eternal life. He was questioning her faith in Him, not her faith in doctrines ... Martha's confession of faith is a high point in the fourth Gospel, like Peter's was in the first Gospel (cf. Matt. 16:16). This is the clearest expression of saving faith thus far in this book. Doubtless John recorded it because it advances his major purpose of convincing his readers that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so they might obtain eternal life by believing in Him (20:31).*
 - b) Leon Morris, *She brings out three points. First, Jesus is "the Christ," that is the Messiah of Jewish expectation (see on 1:20, 41). Second, he is "the Son of God" ... Third, she speaks of Jesus as "who was to come into the world" ... Taken together these three affirmations give us as high a view of the person of Christ as one well may have. Martha should be remembered by this moving declaration rather than by her worst moment of criticism and fretfulness.*
 - c) William Hendriksen, *Martha's confession here is positive, heroic, and comprehensive. It is, indeed, very touching, all the more remarkable because it was made under such trying circumstances ... That a little later (see on 11:39) Martha wavers again, so that she then for the moment does not see the full implications of her previous confession, is understandable. Martha's eyes were not always fixed on Jesus. Sometimes they were turned in the direction of a corpse. When that happened, her spiritual vision became obscured. Peter had a somewhat similar experience (see Matt. 14:28-31).*

- d) William Barclay, *When we believe in Jesus, when we accept what he says about God and about life and stake everything on it, in truth we are resurrected, for we are freed from the fear which is characteristic of the godless life; we are freed from the frustration which is characteristic of the sin-ridden life; we are freed from the futility of the Christless life. Life is raised from sin's death and becomes so rich that it cannot die but must find in death only the transition to a higher life.*
- e) F. F. Bruce, *Did Martha believe what he told her? She could accept it by faith, but she could not understand it, any more than any other disciple of his could understand it before he rose from the dead. But, asked about her faith, she confessed her faith in the person who was speaking to her.*
- f) Charles Swindoll, *Martha continued to express her faith in Jesus, declaring Him to be the Christ and the Son of God. She demonstrated remarkably mature theological understanding, even more than the Twelve! Yet she still did not understand the Lord's full meaning. She would before sunset.*

C. Jesus' meeting with Mary was evidenced by compassion and confusion (28-37)

- 1. Mary went to meet Jesus (28-29), ***When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him.***

- a. Related verse, John 13:13, *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.*

- b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Like Andrew had done (1:41–42), Martha brought her sibling to the Savior. She described Jesus to her sister as "the Teacher," as they both had known Him best. She did it secretly, in order to enable Mary to meet with Jesus privately.*
- 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Presumably, verse 28 contains an unrecorded invitation delivered personally at the request of Jesus, so Mary went outside the city with others following her, assuming she was headed for the tomb.*
- 3) Leon Morris, *... he is recognized as incomparable: he is "the Teacher." It is important to notice this use of the term by a woman. The rabbis refused to instruct women, but Jesus took a very different view.*
- 4) Edwin Blum, *He evidently wanted to have a private conversation with Mary. His purpose was probably to comfort and instruct her. "The Teacher" is a notable title for it was unusual for a Jewish Rabbi to instruct a woman (cf. 4:1–42).*
- 5) William Hendriksen, *Why did she call Mary quietly? ... Was she afraid, perhaps, that otherwise a controversy would arise between Jesus and the Jews, and did she wish to give also Mary an opportunity to converse with the Master in private? That is probable.*

- 2. The Jews followed Mary (30-31), ***Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.***

- a. Related verse, John 11:19, *and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.*

- b. Comments

- 1) Edwin Blum, *Mary's sudden departure to see Jesus caused the crowd of Jewish comforters to follow her. So a private session with Jesus became impossible.*
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *Mary is found three times in the Gospel record, and each time she is at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; 12:3). She sat at His feet and listened to His word; she fell at His feet and poured out her sorrow; and she came to His feet to give Him her praise and worship.*
- 3) Leon Morris, *The Jews (v. 19) had remained with Mary; they did not accompany Martha when she went out to meet Jesus. John tells us that they were "comforting" Mary, though we do not know exactly what form that took. When they saw that Mary got up quickly and left they followed, telling themselves that she was going to wail at the tomb (for lamentation at the tomb cf. Wis. 19:3). They may have intended to share in this activity. Their action meant that what followed would have many witnesses and so receive wide publicity.*

- 4) William Hendriksen, *Commentators suggest several possible reasons to account for the fact that Jesus remained there even after his conversation with Martha ... the place where the conversations with Martha and (later) with Mary occurred was in the close proximity of the “cemetery.” Although we cannot be sure about this, the account, nevertheless, leaves this impression upon us (cf. verses 30, 32, 33, 34, 38). Now if this was the case, it is not hard to understand why Jesus, whose business was not in the house of mourning but at the tomb, would have remained right where he was.*
3. Mary’s initial statement to Jesus (32), ***Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”***
- a. Related verse, John 11:21, *Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*
- b. Comments
- 1) Warren Wiersbe, *Mary’s only recorded words in the Gospels are given in John 11:32, and they echo what Martha had already said (John 11:21).*
 - 2) Leon Morris, *Mary now came to the spot where Jesus was waiting. She greeted him by falling at his feet in homage; she seems to have been more emotional than her rather matter-of-fact sister ... Mary’s words ... are eloquent of a firm conviction that Jesus’ power could have saved Lazarus from death. They reveal Mary’s certainty that Jesus could overcome sickness. But they reveal no more.*
 - 3) William Hendriksen, *Note that while Martha did not fall down at Jesus’ feet (11:20; 21), Mary did not add (as Martha had done), “And even now I know that whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give thee.” That seems to even the score. In any event, on the basis of what is found here in John 11 there is insufficient evidence to declare that Mary’s faith was more excellent in quality or degree than Martha’s. But see also chapter 12:1–8; then Luke 10:38–42. In the latter story it surely was Mary who “chose the good part.”*
 - 4) George Beasley-Murray, *Her statement to Jesus does, after all, reflect faith in the Lord’s power to heal, but grief clouds her vision, and the arrival of the “consolers” prevents further conversation.*
 - 5) Grant Osborne, *There is some debate as to whether Mary is rebuking Jesus for not being there for him ... it is best to see her, like Martha, characterized more by sorrow than rebuke—she is pouring out her heart to Jesus with much the same burgeoning faith Martha showed.*
4. Jesus’ emotional response to Mary (33), ***When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.***
- a. Related verses
- 1) John 12:27, *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.*
 - 2) John 13:21, *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”*
- b. Comments
- 1) Key words in verse 33 are *deeply moved* - to have an intense, strong feeling of concern, indignation; and *greatly troubled* - to be agitated deeply moved in one’s spirit, used of a horse snorting with rage.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *These emotions mingled in Jesus’ spirit as He contemplated the situation before Him. John also described Jesus as troubled ... Jesus was angry, but at what? The context provides some help in identifying the cause of His anger. Evidently as Jesus viewed the misery that death inflicts on humanity and the loved ones of those who die, He thought of its cause: sin. Many of the Jews present had come from Jerusalem, where Jesus had encountered stubborn unbelief. The sin of unbelief resulted in spiritual death, the source of eternal grief and mourning. Probably Jesus felt angry because He was face to face with the consequences of sin, and particularly the sin of unbelief.*
 - 3) Edwin Blum, *In great contrast with the Greek gods’ apathy or lack of emotion, Jesus’ emotional life attests the reality of His union with people ... Why was Jesus angry? Some have argued that He was angry because of the people’s unbelief or hypocritical wailing. But this seems foreign to the context. A better explanation is that Jesus was angry at the tyranny of Satan who had brought sorrow and death to people through sin (cf. 8:44; Heb. 2:14–15).*

- 4) Warren Wiersbe, *At what was He indignant? At the ravages of sin in the world that He had created. Death is an enemy, and Satan uses the fear of death as a terrible weapon (Heb. 2:14–18). No wonder Jesus was indignant!*
- 5) D. A. Carson, *It does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but it is roughly equivalent to ‘in himself’: his inward reaction was anger or outrage or indignation.*
- 6) Leon Morris, *The previous verse has said nothing about Mary’s tears, but they were to be expected, and this verse makes it clear that she was wailing in grief, as were the Jews who had accompanied her. The word signifies a loud weeping, a wailing. It was the habit of the day to express grief in a noisy, unrestrained fashion and this is what these mourners were doing. With a crowd of people all doing this there must have been quite a scene of confusion and sorrow. The sight of it caused Jesus deep emotion ... It must refer to his deep concern and indignation at the attitude of the mourners. They so completely misunderstood the nature of death and that of the Person of the Son. Even Mary, who from what we know of her elsewhere might have been expected to have understanding, had her thoughts firmly fixed on earth.*
- 7) William Hendriksen, *The intense emotion which surged in the heart of the Lord comprised at least one other element besides indignation. It went beyond anger and included more than this. The entire setting clearly indicates that it also included sympathy. In fact the immediate context does not even mention sin ... It would seem, therefore, that the translation was deeply moved in the spirit is the best. Thus rendered, the verb is sufficiently comprehensive to include both indignation and sympathy.*
- 8) F. F. Bruce, *Our Evangelist would have agreed completely with the writer to the Hebrews that Jesus is well able to sympathize with his people’s weaknesses, having been tested himself in the school of suffering. It was in sympathy with those who wept that he also wept. Here is no automaton, but a real human being.*
- 9) George Beasley Murray, *Despite the testimony of the Bible, despite the signs of Jesus wrought among them, which all bore witness to the life of the divine sovereignty that had come into the world through him, and despite the word that he proclaimed, with its emphasis on the promise of life now and hereafter, they mourned “like the rest of men.” It was this unbelief of the people of God in the presence of him who is the “Resurrection and the Life,” arrived among them to call their friend and brother from the grave, that made Jesus angry. The contrast between the Revealer who brought the word of God and lived by it and the recipients of it is startlingly exemplified here.*
- 10) William Barclay, *Here, it (deeply moved in spirit) must mean that such deep emotion seized Jesus that an involuntary groan was wrung from his heart ... Here is one of the most precious things in the gospel. So deeply did Jesus enter into human sorrows that his heart was wrung with anguish ... But there is more. To any Greek reading this—and we must remember that it was written for Greeks—this would be a staggering and incredible picture. John had written his whole gospel on the theme that in Jesus we see the mind of God. To the Greeks, the primary characteristic of God was what they called apatheia, which means total inability to feel any emotion whatsoever ... The Greeks believed in an isolated, passionless and compassionless God ... What a different picture Jesus gave. He showed us a God whose heart is wrung with anguish for the anguish of his people. The greatest thing Jesus did was to bring us the news of a God who cares.*
- 11) Charles Swindoll, *Unlike the selfish gods of mythology, the triune God of the Bible empathizes with His creation. Furthermore, He is justifiably angry with the cruelty of evil, which oppresses His beloved creation. Death is the ultimate affront to His creative act; it tries to destroy what He intended to last forever.*
- 12) Grant Osborne, *Jesus is overcome by the horror of the human dilemma under sin and death, and as a result he is filled with anger. The specter of death hanging over all humanity unsettles him. This is critical for us as well. Christ and Christ alone has overcome death, and we must direct our lives by that fact.*

5. Jesus went to the tomb and wept (34-35), **And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept.**
- a) *Where have you laid him?*
- 1) William Hendriksen, *Indignant with sin as the root of all suffering and sorrow, but also taking to heart the sorrow of those about him, Jesus, thus deeply moved in the spirit and visibly agitated, said, “Where have you laid him?”*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The mystery of our Lord’s incarnation is seen by His question in John 11:34. Jesus knew that Lazarus had died (John 11:11), but He had to ask where he was buried. Our Lord never used His divine powers when normal human means would suffice.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *Jesus now inquires as to the location of the tomb. Instead of directing him they invited him to come and see. “They” is not defined, but apparently it means the two sisters.*
- b) *Jesus wept*
- 1) Thomas Constable, *His weeping doubtless expressed outwardly the sorrow that contemplation of sin and its consequences produced in His heart. Jesus’ tears are proof of His compassion for fallen humanity (cf. Luke 19:41). He could not have been weeping over the loss of His friend Lazarus, since He was about to restore him to life. Likewise it is unlikely that He was just weeping compassionately with Martha and Mary, since He was about to turn their grief into rejoicing. Nevertheless empathy undoubtedly played some part in Jesus’ weeping ... Jesus wept three times, according to the New Testament: (1) here, (2) over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), and (3) in Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7).*
 - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *When Jesus approached the tomb, he could no longer control himself and wept. John used a different word than the word he chose to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews. Perhaps the intent was to show that Jesus’ tears emerged for a different reason—not grief over Lazarus; he had that situation well in hand. Surely the same unbelief and theological ignorance that prompted his anger also produced his grief.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *We are reminded of that other occasion when Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). There as here it was the wrong attitude of the Jews that aroused his deep emotion.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *“Jesus wept” is the shortest and yet the deepest verse in Scripture. His was a silent weeping (the Greek word is used nowhere else in the New Testament) and not the loud lamentation of the mourners. But why did He weep at all? After all, He knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:11) ... Our Lord’s weeping reveals the humanity of the Saviour. He has entered into all of our experiences and knows how we feel. In fact, being the perfect God-Man, Jesus experienced these things in a deeper way than we do. His tears also assure us of His sympathy; He is indeed “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). Today, He is our merciful and faithful High Priest, and we may come to the throne of grace and find all the gracious help that we need (Heb. 4:14–16) ... We see in His tears the tragedy of sin but also the glory of heaven. Perhaps Jesus was weeping for Lazarus, as well as with the sisters, because He knew He was calling His friend from heaven and back into a wicked world where he would one day have to die again. Jesus had come down from heaven; He knew what Lazarus was leaving behind.*
 - 5) William Hendriksen, *... these tears of our Lord were unaccompanied by sin. They were not the tears of the professional mourner, nor those of the sentimentalist, but those of the pure and holy, sympathizing High Priest! They proceeded from the most genuine love for man found in the entire universe, the love which gave itself.*
 - 6) Louis Barbieri, *Jesus’ anger appears to be directed at their lack of faith in what God could do, especially through Jesus. This so moved the Lord that He wept at their unbelief. Note that two significant examples of Jesus weeping (this and Lk 19:41) were in response to the unbelief of the Jewish people.*
 - 7) William Barclay, *Once again, we are shown the picture of Jesus wrung with anguish as he shared the anguish of the human heart. To the Greek reader, that little sentence ‘Jesus wept’ would be the most astonishing thing in an astonishing story. That the Son of God could weep would be almost beyond belief.*

- 8) Charles Swindoll, *While the Son of God is fully divine, He is completely human. Moreover, He is the perfect representation of the Father, who is spirit, yet nonetheless emotionally connected to the creatures bearing His likeness. When we weep, our Creator weeps with us—not with the kind of hopelessness we endure through our ignorance, but with compassion. No one hates the devastating consequences of sin more than He does.*
 - 9) Grant Osborne, ... *the two sides of Jesus' nature—his justice feels outrage, and his love feels grief. This is a perfect model for us as we "hate the sin and love the sinner." Anger and grief go hand in hand as we cope with the sad results of a sinful world.*
6. Mixed feelings on the part of the Jews (36-37), ***So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"***
- a) Related verses
 - 1) John 11:3, *So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."*
 - 2) John 9:6-7, *Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*
 - 3) John 11:21, *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*
 - 4) John 11:32, *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*
 - b) Comments
 - 1) Edwin Blum, *The crowd interpreted His tears as an expression of love, or frustration at not being there to heal Lazarus.*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The spectators saw in His tears an evidence of His love. But some of them said, "If Jesus loved Lazarus so much, why did He not prevent his death?" Perhaps they were thinking, "Jesus is weeping because He was unable to do anything. They are tears of deep regret." In other words, nobody present really expected a miracle! ... Even the disciples did not believe that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead!*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *The Jewish onlookers interpreted Jesus' angry tears in two ways. (1) They took them as evidence of Jesus' great love for Lazarus. They did reflect that, but not as the Jews thought. Jesus was not weeping because death had separated Him from His friend. (2) The Jews also wrongly concluded that Jesus' tears reflected the grief that He felt over His supposed inability to prevent Lazarus from dying. This deduction revealed unbelief as well as ignorance of Jesus' Person. Jesus' healing of the man born blind had occurred several months earlier, but it had obviously made a strong impression on the people living in Jerusalem, since they referred to it now.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *Some of them now reach a position much like that of Martha and Mary. They remember Jesus' ministry to the sick and specifically his opening of the eyes of the blind man. So they ask: "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" There is no reason for thinking of these words as spoken in mockery ... They misinterpret his tears as though they meant frustration. But there is no reason for doubting their sincerity.*
 - 5) William Hendriksen, *The Jews gave a rather limited interpretation to these tears of Jesus, as if they had been shed only in grief over the death of Lazarus and not also (as the context clearly teaches) in genuine sympathy with the tears of others ... The Jews regarded the case of Lazarus to be closed. The matter was hopeless now. After all, Lazarus was dead! But why had not Jesus prevented this death? ... It seems that the news of the raising of Jairus' daughter and of the widow's son had not reached Jerusalem, or if it had, this death was altogether different: it was now the fourth day! This case was hopeless!*
 - 6) Louis Barbieri, *Jesus' show of emotion was cause for division among the mourners (cf. 7:43–44; 9:16; 10:19–21). Some took it as evidence of how much He loved Lazarus. But others (v. 37) questioned Jesus' power or willingness to heal.*

- 7) Grant Osborne, *The onlookers are also split in their reactions (vv. 36–37). Some are touched by the depth of his love for Lazarus and admire his reactions. Others are upset that the one who could heal the blind has not “kept this man from dying.” Both are partly right. Jesus did love Lazarus and could have healed his disease, even from a distance. But on the larger issue they were very wrong, as they would soon find out. They understood neither Jesus’ true purpose nor the extent of his power over sickness and death. God’s timing is always perfect.*

D. The resurrection of Lazarus (38-44)

1. Jesus commanded that the stone be removed from the tomb (38-39a), **Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”**

a. Related verses

- 1) John 11:33, *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.*
- 2) Mark 15:46, *And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*
- 3) John 20:1, *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.*

b. Comments

- 1) Grant Osborne, *This is about much more than the raising of Lazarus. It is a foretaste of what would take place at the cross and empty tomb and also at his second coming, when he will raise the dead and reunite them with their eternal spirits (1 Cor 15:51–55; 1 Thess 4:13–18).*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus proceeded to vindicate His claim that He was the One who would raise the dead and provide life (v. 25) ... Jesus again felt the same angry emotion as He approached Lazarus’ tomb (cf. v. 33). Tombs cut into the limestone hillsides of that area were common. Today several similar caves are visible to everyone.*
- 3) Edwin Blum, *Disturbed emotionally ... He came to the tomb. Tombs were often cut into limestone making a cave in the side of a wall of rock. A stone was placed over the entrance. Jesus commanded that the stone door be taken away. To do so was to risk defilement. But obedience was necessary if Jesus’ purpose was to be realized.*
- 4) Charles Swindoll, *As Jesus approached the cave, He was again moved to anger ... He commanded the men in the crowd to remove the stone from the grave entrance, an act forbidden by rabbinic tradition. The men who obeyed the Lord’s command risked ritual defilement; nevertheless, they obeyed.*
- 5) William Hendriksen, *The tomb was in the form of a cavern or chamber hewn into a rock. We picture the rock as rising from the ground, perhaps slanting back somewhat. In order to ward off wild animals a slab of stone was lying against it ... In performing miracles Jesus did not waste his power. Only God can raise the dead, but men can move a stone away from a tomb. So Jesus bade them do this.*
- 6) Louis Barbieri, *Jesus was again ... deeply moved within (lit., “angered”; the same Greek verb in v. 33), this time because of the unbelief of the crowd ... The command to remove the stone called for faith (v. 39).*

2. Martha objected because the body was decomposing (39b), **Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”**

a. Related verse, John 11:17, *Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.*

b. Comments

- 1) Edwin Blum, *The scene was highly dramatic. The crowd watched and listened. Mary was weeping and Martha objected because after four days putrefaction had set in.*
- 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The one person who declared her faith was Martha (John 11:27), and she failed at the last minute. “Open the tomb? By now he smells!”*

- 3) Grant Osborne, *As it is being rolled away, there is still no realization of his authority over death, and Martha, ever the practical one, objects because Lazarus has been decomposing for four days, and the stench would be terrible (11:39).*
 - 4) Craig Blomberg, *Martha's protest against Jesus' command to remove the stone from the entrance proves that she is not thinking in terms of a bodily resurrection at this moment (v. 39).*
 - 5) Leon Morris, *The Evangelist puts some stress on the actuality of the death of Lazarus ... First comes Jesus' command to remove the stone, then Martha's astonished protest based on the certainty that the body would be decomposing, for it had already been buried for four days ... John also conveys the idea of death by the use of the perfect participle that points to the permanence of the state into which Lazarus had entered.*
 - 6) William Hendriksen, *At this point Martha, the sister of the deceased, riveting her attention upon her brother's corpse and not upon death's Conqueror (see on 11:21, 22), said to him, Lord (see on 1:38), by this time there is an odor (or: by this time he stinks), for he has been dead four days. The evangelist records this objection of Martha in order to emphasize the greatness of the miracle ...*
 - 7) William Barclay, *Martha could think of only one reason for opening the tomb—that Jesus wished to look on the face of his dead friend for the last time. Martha could see no consolation there. She pointed out that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. The point is this. It was a Jewish belief that the spirit of the departed hovered around the tomb for four days, seeking an entrance again into the body. But after four days the spirit finally left, for the face of the body was so decayed that it could no longer be recognized.*
3. Jesus responded to Martha's concern and the stone was removed (40-41a), **Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone.**
- a. Related verse, John 11:4, *But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus' reply summarized what He had said to Martha earlier (vv. 23–26). He viewed raising someone to life as an act that glorified God by revealing His Son. Martha's willingness to allow the removal of the stone testified to her confidence in Jesus. When the stone was away from the tomb's entrance, every eye must have been on Jesus—to see what He would do.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *If she believed His word that He is the Resurrection and the Life and trusted Him, God would be glorified. But unless the sisters had trusted Jesus, permission would not have been given to open the tomb ... With the stone taken away, the tension mounted.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus gently reminded her of the message He had sent at least three days before (John 11:4), and He urged her to believe it. True faith relies on God's promises and thereby releases God's power. Martha relented, and the stone was rolled away.*
 - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *These words must have been uttered audibly and publicly. The purpose of the prayer was to create faith in the hearts of those standing around the tomb of Lazarus wondering what would happen next. Here we get a glimpse into the relationship of the Trinity and particularly the Father-Son relationship within the Godhead that John dealt with so frequently in this Gospel.*
 - 5) Leon Morris, *What was about to happen would be a spectacular miracle, a display of the power of Jesus, an inestimable gift to the sisters. But typically Jesus speaks of none of these. For him "the glory of God" was the one important thing. This means that the real meaning of what he would do would be accessible only to faith. All who were there, believers or not, would see the miracle. But Jesus is promising Martha a sight of the glory. The crowd would see the miracle, but only believers would perceive its real significance, the glory ... After Jesus' words they moved the stone. Who actually did this is not said, but presumably it was "the Jews" who accompanied Martha and Mary.*
 - 6) William Hendriksen, *Of course, Jesus cannot have meant that the performance of the miracle was dependent upon Martha's exercise of faith. What he intended to convey was this, that if Martha would only stop thinking about that corpse and would rivet her attention on Jesus, trusting completely in him (his power and his love), she would see this miracle as a true sign, an illustration and proof of the glory of God reflected in the Son of God.*

- 7) Louis Barbieri, ... *Did I not say to you [pl.] that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? Jesus previously spoke these words to His disciples and the messengers sent from the two sisters (vv. 3–4). These words would have been communicated to Mary and Martha on the messengers' return.*
 - 8) Grant Osborne, "Glory" in this Gospel is linked to the miracles as signs pointing to the power of God (see 9:3; 11:4). The death and resurrection of Jesus are seen as glory in 12:40–41; 17:5. To experience this glory, Martha and the others need the same faith shown by the disciples in 2:11. The glory will be there no matter what, but it will be perceived and appropriated only by those who see with the eye of faith.
4. Jesus' prayer to His Father (41b-42), **And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."**
- a. Related verses
 - 1) John 17:1, *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,*
 - 2) John 12:30, *Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.*
 - 3) John 17:8, *For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*
 - 4) John 17:21, *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Edwin Blum, *With the stone taken away, the tension mounted. What would Jesus do? He simply thanked His Father for granting His request. He knew He was doing the Father's will in manifesting His love and power. His prayer of thanksgiving was public, not so that He would be honored as a Wonder-Worker but so He would be seen as the Father's obedient Son. The granting of His request by the Father would give clear evidence to the people that He had been sent by the Father and would cause the people to believe (cf. Elijah's prayer; 1 Kings 18:37).*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus addressed God in prayer, characteristically, as His Father. He spoke as though the raising of Lazarus was something that the Father had already decreed, which it was (cf. v. 11) ... It had the effect of focusing attention on the Son as God the Father's agent in performing the miracle. Jesus' prayer also had the effect of drawing the onlookers into His intimate relationship with the Father. It also demonstrated that He really did do nothing independently of the Father (cf. 5:19–47; 1 Kings 18:36–37).*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *Once again we notice that faith has content and that content is concerned with the mission of the Son. It includes the conviction that he is indeed God's "Sent One" (for "sent" see on 3:17). John consistently depicts Jesus as dependent on the Father and concerned for his glory.*
 - 4) Kenneth Gangel, *The purpose of the prayer was to create faith in the hearts of those standing around the tomb of Lazarus wondering what would happen next. Here we get a glimpse into the relationship of the Trinity and particularly the Father-Son relationship within the Godhead that John dealt with so frequently in this Gospel.*
 - 5) Warren Wiersbe, *The emphasis from this point on was on the faith of the spectators, the people who had come to comfort Mary and Martha. Jesus paused to pray (John 11:41; also see 6:11) and thanked the Father that the prayer had already been heard. When had He prayed? Probably when He received the message that His friend was sick (John 11:4). The Father then told Him what the plan was, and Jesus obeyed the Father's will. His prayer now was for the sake of the unbelieving spectators, that they might know that God had sent Him.*
 - 6) William Hendriksen, *The purpose of the prayer, in which, of course, the close relation between the Father and the Son appears, was this, that the surrounding multitude might come to believe ... that Jesus is the Sent One, the true Messiah, divinely commissioned to carry out his mediatorial task.*

- 7) Louis Barbieri, *Christ offered a previous (unspoken or unrecorded) petition to the Father to raise Lazarus, evident in the words You have heard Me. Also, You always hear Me (v. 42) shows that by His inviolate union with the Father, every prayer He prayed was answered, though not always affirmatively (as in Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane). Before it happened, Christ expressed absolute certainty that He would raise Lazarus.*
 - 8) Charles Swindoll, *Once the stone was removed, Jesus prayed aloud so that witnesses to the miracle would understand that He and the Father were united in the miracle. Death is not the will of the Father; He hates death. Therefore, Jesus was not overriding His Father's decision to "take" Lazarus; He was reclaiming Lazarus from the enemy of life.*
 - 9) F. F. Bruce, *Some commentators have seen a certain artificiality in such a prayer. However, "if prayer is a form of union with God, then the Johannine Jesus is always praying, for he and the Father are one." The raising of the dead is a divine prerogative which the Father shares with the Son (cf. John 5:21, 25–29), and it is important that the bystanders should understand this. So, in their hearing, he thanks God for having heard him.*
5. Jesus commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb (43-44), **When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."**
- a. Related verses
 - 1) John 5:28-29, *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*
 - 2) John 19:40, *So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.*
 - 3) John 20:7, *and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) George Beasley-Murray, *The event for which all that has preceded in the chapter has prepared us is described with the greatest economy of words: a loud cry of Jesus to Lazarus quickens him and brings him forth from the tomb.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *The dead man heard the voice of the Son of God and lived, as Jesus had predicted (5:25, 28–29). If Jesus had not specified Lazarus by name, every dead person might have arisen at His command ... this sign signified that Jesus could raise everyone to life as only God can do ... While there are similarities between Lazarus and Jesus' resurrections, we must also remember their significant differences: Lazarus came to life only to die again later, as a mortal, whereas Jesus arose never to die again, as an immortal. Lazarus arose with the same physical body that went into his tomb, but Jesus arose with a spiritual body that could pass through solid objects (cf. 20:19, 26; 1 Cor. 15:55–49). Thus Lazarus' resurrection was only an anticipation of the resurrection of Jesus that was to come. Nevertheless it was the greatest of Jesus' signs ... There could now be no doubt about Jesus' ability to raise the dead. Physically He will do this for everyone at the resurrections yet future. He will raise Christians at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16), Old Testament and Tribulation saints at the Second Coming (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:4, 6), and unbelievers at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:5). Spiritually Jesus gives life to all who believe on Him the moment they trust in Him (5:24).*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *To have been there and seen Lazarus step out of the dark cave still wrapped in the linens would be electrifying. Can you imagine the joy and the hysteria at that moment?*
 - 4) W. Hall Harris, *Just as the preincarnate Word gave physical life and light to humankind in creation (1:2), so Jesus as the Word Incarnate gives spiritual life and light to people who believe in Him.*
 - 5) J. Vernon McGee, *While our Lord used different methods to perform His miracles of healing, his method of raising the dead was always the same. He called to them and spoke to them as if they heard Him. Do you know why He did that? Because they heard Him! I think that when He returns with a shout, every one of us [believers who have died] will hear his own name because He will call us back from the dead.*
 - 6) Louis Barbieri, *Like the Good Shepherd who calls His own sheep by name (10:3), Christ called for Lazarus personally to come forth.*

- 7) Edwin Blum, *On other occasions Jesus had said that men would hear His voice and come out of their graves (5:28) and that His sheep hear His voice (10:16, 27) ... Also He now speaks and calls spiritually dead people to spiritual life. Many who are dead in sins and trespasses believe and come to life by the power of God (Eph. 2:1–10).*
- 8) Warren Wiersbe, *The experience of Lazarus is a good illustration of what happens to a sinner when he trusts the Saviour (Eph. 2:1–10). Lazarus was dead, and all sinners are dead. He was decayed, because death and decay go together. All lost people are spiritually dead, but some are more “decayed” than others. No one can be “more dead” than another ... Because of the great change in Lazarus, many people desired to see him; and his “living witness” was used by God to bring people to salvation (John 12:9–11). There are no recorded words of Lazarus in the Gospels, but his daily walk is enough to convince people that Jesus is the Son of God. Because of his effective witness, Lazarus was persecuted by the religious leaders who wanted to kill him and get rid of the evidence.*
- 9) William Hendriksen, *He did not want Lazarus to stand there a while, in order to be gaped at or to answer ever so many questions ... To prevent all this and to help Lazarus, who was still handicapped by the grave-bands and the sweat-band, Jesus now issued a brisk command (probably to those standing nearest): Jesus said to them, Untie him and let him go ...*
- 10) William Barclay, *Everything Jesus did was due to the power of God and designed for the glory of God. How different human beings are! So much that we do is attempted in our own power and designed for our own prestige. It may be that there would be more wonders in our lives, too, if we ceased to act by ourselves and for ourselves and set God in the central place.*

E. The Beginning of the Road to Calvary (45-57)

1. Reactions to the raising of Lazarus (45-54)

- a. A response of faith by many Jews (45), ***Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,***

1) Related verses

- a) John 12:11, *because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*
- b) John 11:19, *and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.*
- c) John 2:23, *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.*

2) Comments

- a) Thomas Constable, *Many who had come to console Mary believed in Him, but the depth of their faith undoubtedly varied ... John’s reference to Mary, rather than to Martha and Mary, may imply that these people had greater affection for Mary. Alternatively, they may have viewed her as needing more emotional support than her sister (cf. v. 19).*
- b) Edwin Blum, *For many of the Jews, this miracle was clear proof of Jesus’ claim. In response they trusted Him.*
- c) Leon Morris, *John first brings before us those who believed. These were “of the Jews,” and John makes it clear that there were “many” of them. Interestingly he describes them as those “who had come to visit Mary.” Throughout this narrative the emphasis has been on Martha; thus it is curious that the Jews are said to have come to the less prominent sister. They were associated with her also in verses 31 and 35. It may be that they were more concerned for Mary than for the bustling Martha. Mary may well have been more emotional, and may perhaps have been in greater need of consolation.*
- d) William Hendriksen, *We read that many of these Jews who had visited the home of Mary to pour out their grief had observed what Jesus had done ... it can hardly be doubted that many sincere believers in Jesus Christ as the spiritual Savior were added to the flock on the day of the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus.*
- e) Grant Osborne, *Those who believe in 11:45 are primarily the mourners who were present with Mary and Martha at the miracle. Theirs was undoubtedly the type of partial belief centered on the sign-miracle as in 2:23–25, but it was still the beginning stages of true faith.*

- b. A response by some Jews to tell the Pharisees what had happened in Bethany (46), **but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.**
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Other observers of this miracle went to the Pharisees. The contrast suggests that they disbelieved, and went to inform the Pharisees, perhaps so that these leaders would take action against Jesus.*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, ... *others were only hardened in sin or confused. They went to His enemies, the Pharisees, and reported what had happened.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *While John makes no explicit declaration about their motive, in the context there can be little doubt but that they acted in a spirit of hostility. They were bearing the latest news to the enemy, not trying to win them over.*
 - 4) William Hendriksen, *Some of the Jews, having witnessed the miracle and having noticed its effect upon the people, became even more embittered against him ... With sinister intention the latter group went off to the Pharisees (see on 3:1), not in order to tell them that they were all wrong about Jesus, but in order to convince them that drastic action had to be taken against the miracle-worker.*
 - 5) F. F. Bruce, ... *some went off and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. It is implied that they did so with no friendly intention (the more so as they are set in contrast with the many who believed).*
 - 6) Edward Klink, *Since the beginning of the Gospel, the "Pharisees" were connected to the authorities in Jerusalem (see 1:19, 24), and the people had long been aware (often motivated by fear; 9:22) that they were to report such incidents to the authorities ...*
- c. A response of the chief priests and Pharisees to convene a meeting (47-53)
- 1) Their basic concern was their well-being (47-48), **So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."**
 - a) Related verses
 - 1] Matthew 26:3, *Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,*
 - 2] Matthew 5:22, *But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*
 - b) Comments
 - 1] The word for *council* in Greek is *sanhedrin*, the highest Jewish council which exercised jurisdiction in civil and religious matters. It had no authority over life or death, military actions or taxation. The *many signs* must certainly refer to the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9 and the raising of Lazarus.
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *The raising of Lazarus convinced Israel's leaders that they had to take more drastic action against Jesus. John recorded this decision as the high point of Israel's official rejection of God's Son so far. This decision led directly to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion ... They believed that their present tactics against Jesus needed adjusting, or He might destroy them (their position and power) ... These rulers viewed Israel as their nation rather than God's nation, and they did not want to lose control of it or their prestige as its leaders (cf. King Saul).*
 - 3] Edwin Blum, *This miraculous sign was so significant that the chief priests and the Pharisees decided to call an emergency session of the Sanhedrin ... Doubtless they felt that Jesus was some kind of magician who by secret arts was deceiving the people ... The council expressed its inability to solve the problem by continuing to do what they had been doing. Official disapproval, excommunication, and counterteaching were not stopping Jesus' influence. The outcome would be insurrection and the Romans would crush the Jewish revolt; taking away both our place (i.e., the temple) and our nation.*

- 4] Warren Wiersbe, *It was necessary that the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) meet and discuss what to do with Jesus. They were not seeking after truth; they were seeking for ways to protect their own selfish interests. If He gathered too many followers, He might get the attention of the Roman authorities; and this could hurt the Jewish cause.*
 - 5] Kenneth Gangel, *Note there was no denial of the miracle but a clamor for some plan to cut losses and protect the religious hierarchy in the future. The faith of some was countered by the hostility of others as formal religious leaders put aside other differences to combine their opposition to this annoying prophet who opened the eyes of the blind and raised the dead.*
 - 6] Leon Morris, *It has always been the case that those whose minds are made up to oppose what Christ stands for will not be convinced by any amount of evidence. In this spirit these men recognize that the miracles have taken place, but find in this a reason for more whole-hearted opposition, not for faith ... To them it is certain that many will put their trust in Jesus if they leave him alone. Indeed, they go as far as to say that "everyone" will do so, an exaggeration that indicates the strength of their fears. The Romans would not stand by indifferent if there were popular tumult stirred up by messianic expectations. Since they would certainly take strong action, the speakers feared the destruction of all they stood for.*
 - 7] William Hendriksen, *If no action was taken, the Romans, hearing about the new Messiah who was about to lead the rebellion against the constituted government, would come and take away from the Jews (particularly, from the Sanhedrin) both their place (the city of Jerusalem with its temple, perhaps with special reference to the latter; cf. Acts 6:13) and their nation, putting an end to their national existence, scattering them all over the earth.*
 - 8] William Barclay, *... the Sadducees insisted that Jesus must be eliminated or the Romans would come and take their authority away. In AD 70, that is exactly what happened. The Romans, weary of Jewish stubbornness, besieged Jerusalem, and left it a heap of ruins with a plough drawn across the Temple area. How different things might have been if the Jews had accepted Jesus! The very steps they took to save their nation destroyed it. This destruction happened in AD 70; John's gospel was written about AD 100; and all who read it would see the dramatic irony in the words of the Sadducees.*
 - 9] Edward Klink, *The glaring absence of his name by the Jewish authorities and in its place the now common designation, "this man," serves to reflect the disdain of Jesus's person. There is no longer the need to make a legal case (e.g., 5:16–18), for the case against "this man" had become much more personal.*
 - 10] Grant Osborne, *We should notice that they do not ever consider the possibility that Jesus might actually be the Messiah. The leaders and many in the crowds have hardened their hearts and minds and are no longer open to the truth (5:41–47; 7:27, 47–49; 8:48–59; 10:33). This is shown in the centrality of "our" in "our temple and our nation." While on the surface they seem deeply concerned for the temple, in reality they are primarily concerned for their own position in society. They want to keep power for themselves.*
 - 11] Charles Swindoll, *The public ministry of Jesus was a three-year moment of truth for the religious leaders of first-century Israel. The Word of God, who had been promised for centuries, now stood before them in flesh and blood, truth incarnate. They denied the truth, disputed the truth, marginalized the truth, and even tried to silence the truth; but Jesus will not be set aside or put off. He leaves no compromising middle way. Each individual must decide what to do with Him. Deny or submit? Reject or believe? Embrace Him and experience freedom or kill Him and preserve the illusion of power?*
- 2) A prophetic announcement by the High Priest (49-50), ***But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."***
- a) Related verses
- 1] Matthew 26:3, *Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,*
 - 2] John 18:13-14, *First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.*

b) Comments

- 1] Edwin Blum, *Caiaphas was the high priest that year* (cf. 18:13–14, 24, 28). Originally the high priest held his position for a lifetime, but the Romans were afraid of letting a man gain too much power. So the Romans appointed high priests at their convenience. Caiaphas had the office from A.D. 18 to 36. His contempt was expressed in his words, *You know nothing at all!* His judgment was that this Man must be sacrificed if the nation was to continue in Rome's favor. The alternative was destruction of the Jewish nation in war (11:48). But their rejection of Jesus did not solve the problem. The Jewish people followed false shepherds into a war against Rome (A.D. 66–70), which did in fact destroy their nation.
- 2] Thomas Constable, *John's reference to "that year" (v. 49) was probably with the year of Jesus' death in mind* (cf. v. 51; 18:13). Another possibility is that John may have been hinting at the insecure nature of the high priestly office in those days, when Rome arbitrarily deposed and appointed leaders with little warning. Caiaphas' insulting statement to his fellow Sanhedrin members presents him as an arrogant egotist ... He viewed Jesus' death as a sacrifice that was in the best interest of the Sanhedrin members. Jesus' sacrificial death was precisely God's intention, though for a different reason. Caiaphas viewed Jesus as a scapegoat whose sacrifice would guarantee the life of Israel's leaders. God viewed Jesus as a lamb who would die to guarantee the life of believers.
- 3] Warren Wiersbe, *The official decision that day was that Jesus must die* (see Matt. 12:14; Luke 19:47; John 5:18; 7:1, 19–20, 25). The leaders thought that they were in control of the situation, but it was God who was working out His predetermined plan (Acts 2:23). Originally, they wanted to wait until after the Passover, but God had decreed otherwise.
- 4] Leon Morris, *What he means is "that fateful year."* That was the year when the world's salvation was accomplished. In that year of all years it was Caiaphas who was the high priest ... *"You know nothing at all!"* demonstrate a rudeness that is alleged to have been typical of the Sadducees. *"You"* is emphatic and probably contemptuous. He himself clear-sightedly and ruthlessly discerns a line of action that he accounts desirable and he contemptuously dismisses the whole assembly of the Sanhedrin because its members do not see things the same way ... *"It is better for you"* concentrates attention on their own position. Neither Caiaphas nor the others were basically concerned for abstract right and wrong, nor yet for the nation as a whole. But the position of the privileged class is threatened and their action would save this privileged class that the high priest recommends.
- 5] Grant Osborne, *As head of the Sanhedrin it was expected for Caiaphas to speak up. He begins by accusing them of ignorance: "You know nothing at all!"* ... Caiaphas means that the Sanhedrin has failed to see the logic of the evidence and their own earlier conclusions about this dangerous blasphemer, Jesus of Nazareth ... He believes Jesus should be sacrificed both to keep the Jewish people from the wrath of Rome (*"for the nation,"* with *"for,"* hyper, constituting sacrificial language) and to keep them in political power (*"better for you"*). Jesus would become a scapegoat given over to death for their sake.
- 6] William Hendriksen, *It is clear that this chairman was not merely a parliamentarian who kept order. On the contrary, he himself did most of the talking. In the patchwork of his personality the strands of brazen impudence, insane ambition, rancorous jealousy and consummate cleverness were interwoven. He knew all the answers, and he knew how to make others see things his way.*
- 7] George Beasley-Murray, *Caiaphas' counsel was given with arrogance typical of Sadducean tradition. Josephus wrote of the Sadducees: "The behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degrees wild; and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them"* (Wars, 2.166).
- 8] Edward Klink, *Caiaphas ... suggests to the Sanhedrin that they make a Jewish problem look just as much like a Roman problem! Such a maneuver would remove Jewish-Roman tensions and pit both the Jews and the Romans against the one man, Jesus.*

- 3) John's interpretation of Caiaphas' statement (51-52), ***He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.***
- a) Related verse , John 10:16, *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Craig Keener, *Despite the high priest's more limited intention, his words ironically convey a greater point for John's audience. Both Greeks and Jews believed that people could sometimes speak God's truth without meaning to do so, especially those appointed as God's representatives. Some Jewish traditions seem to associate prophecy with the priesthood.*
 - 2] Thomas Constable, *John interpreted Caiaphas' words for his readers. He viewed Caiaphas' statement as a prophecy. Caiaphas spoke God's will as the high priest, even though he did not realize that he was doing so. Caiaphas' motive was, of course, completely contrary to God's will, but God overruled that in order to accomplish His will through the high priest's selfish advice (cf. Gen. 50:20; Num. 22–24).*
 - 3] C. K. Barrett, *God is able to speak through an unwilling agent (Caiaphas) as well as through a willing one (Jesus).*
 - 4] Edwin Blum, *John by God's Spirit recognized a deep irony in Caiaphas' words. As the high priest, Caiaphas pointed to the last sacrificial Lamb in a prophecy he did not even know he made. Caiaphas meant Jesus had to be killed, but God intended the priest's words as a reference to His substitutionary atonement. Jesus' death would abolish the old system in God's eyes by fulfilling all its types and shadows. His death was not only for Jews but also for the world, thus making a new body from both (cf. Eph. 2:14–18; 3:6).*
 - 5] Warren Wiersbe, *True to his vision of a worldwide family of God, John added his inspired explanation: Jesus would die not only for the Jews, but for all of God's children who would be gathered together in one heavenly family. (note John 4:42 and 10:16.)*
 - 6] Kenneth Gangel, *The arrogant Caiaphas made a prophecy far beyond his own understanding when he described the death of Jesus as an event in which one would die for many, particularly for the entire nation of Israel. We call this substitutionary (or vicarious) atonement. But Israel alone was not and is not the beneficiary. Jesus is our substitute as he is for all people. Unwittingly and in the providence of God, the high priest became a channel of divine revelation. Substitutionary atonement would reach beyond the Jewish nation to the "other sheep" of John 10 (Rom. 9–11).*
 - 7] Leon Morris, *What Caiaphas spoke as a piece of cynical political realism, God meant to be understood in a deeper, more significant way ... John also sees a wider purpose in the death of Jesus than the salvation of the Jewish nation. This death would be the means of gathering together the children of God wherever they might have been scattered ... "The scattered children of God" would normally be taken on the lips of a Jew to mean the Jews of the Dispersion, but here the words point to Gentile Christians.*
 - 8] F. F. Bruce, *In earlier days the high priest of Israel declared the will of God by the operation of the Urim and Thummim, and there is some evidence that even later the occasional gift of prophecy was believed to attach to the office, So John treats his words as a prophecy of the vicarious character of Jesus' death, and adds something not implicit in the high priest's language—that Jesus' death would be endured not only for the Jewish nation but for all mankind (cf. John 6:51, "for the life of the world"). In particular, Jesus' death would effect the bringing together into a unity, into a united community, of the widely dispersed "children of God."*
 - 9] Edward Klink, *Caiaphas the high priest may have been moving his lips, but it was Jesus the high priest who was doing the speaking ... The Gospel is moving us to see that the work of Jesus the high priest is quickly and necessarily headed to the cross.*

- 10] William Hendriksen, *This passage affords a glimpse into the mystery of the wonderful relationship between the divine counsel and providence, on the one hand, and the exercise of human responsibility, on the other; Caiaphas was left entirely free, was not prevented in any way from saying what his wicked heart urged him to say. Nevertheless, God's will, without becoming even in the least degree defiled, so directed the choice of phraseology that the words which issue from the lips of this coldblooded murderer were exactly the ones that were needed to give expression to the most sublime and glorious truth regarding God's redemptive love. Without becoming aware of it the villain had become the prophet!*
- 11] William Barclay, *Jesus was to die for the nation and also for all God's people throughout the world. The early Church made a very beautiful use of these words. Its first service order book was called the Didache, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. It dates back to shortly after AD 100. When the bread was being broken, it was laid down that it should be said: 'Even as this bread was scattered upon the mountains, and was brought into one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom' (Didache 9:4). The bread had been put together from the scattered elements of which it was composed; so some day the scattered elements of the Church must be united into one. That is something about which to think as we look on the broken bread of the sacrament.*
- 4) The Council' commitment to put Jesus to death (53), ***So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.***
- a) Related verse, John 7:1, *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.*
- b) Comments
- 1] Thomas Constable, *The result of this apparently formal meeting was the Sanhedrin's official decision to kill Jesus. This decision constituted another climax in the ongoing opposition against Jesus that John traced in this Gospel (cf. Matt. 26:3–4). Obviously, in light of this information, the later trials of Jesus before the high priests and the Sanhedrin were simply formalities designed to give the appearance of justice ... John did not record Jesus' trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, as the Synoptic writers did. He may have viewed this meeting of the Sanhedrin as the real trial of Jesus.*
 - 2] Warren Wiersbe, *The official decision that day was that Jesus must die (see Matt. 12:14; Luke 19:47; John 5:18; 7:1, 19–20, 25). The leaders thought that they were in control of the situation, but it was God who was working out His predetermined plan (Acts 2:23). Originally, they wanted to wait until after the Passover, but God had decreed otherwise.*
 - 3] Leon Morris, *Caiaphas's words mark a turning point. From that day (John has the habit of noting the time when events took place) they looked for ways and means of killing Jesus. The high priest's words had the effect of clarifying their ideas; they now knew what they must do.*
 - 4] William Hendriksen, *The official agreement has now been reached in an official Sanhedrin-session, though the mock-trial, with the sentence fixed in advance, has not yet been conducted.*
 - 5] George Beasley-Murray, *The decision has been made already; it is only the carrying out of the judgment which is still to come" (35). Precisely that is the position assumed in Mark 14:1–2 ...*
 - 6] Charles Swindoll, *By the end of the meeting, the religious leaders decided on their official disposition concerning Jesus. Submitting to the truth would require them to cede their power to the Messiah, which they refused to do. Therefore, because they wouldn't accept the truth, they officially decided to kill Him.*
 - 7] Grant Osborne, *The decision is now finalized, and "from that day on they plotted to take his life" (11:53). This consummates a string of preliminary decisions to rid themselves of the heretic and troublemaker, Jesus (5:18; 7:30, 32; 8:59; 10:31). The raising of Lazarus is the catalyst behind it, since it magnified Jesus' popularity and support from the common people, so the leaders feel they can delay no longer. What they fail to realize is that they are actually doing God's will, as Peter will note later in Acts 2:23: "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge."*

- 8] Craig Blomberg, *For John, the resurrection of Lazarus is thus the climactic catalyst for the plot that will eventuate in Christ's death* (v. 53). Critics have sometimes complained that the disciples could not have known what occurred in the private sessions of the Sanhedrin, but the friendly roles played by Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Gamaliel elsewhere in the Gospels and Acts suggest that several sources could have 'leaked' the information.
- d. A response by Jesus to go to Ephraim (54), **Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.**
- 1) Ephraim is a city of uncertain location.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *The town of Ephraim may have been Old Testament Ephron, which stood about four miles northeast of Bethel and twelve miles from Jerusalem* (2 Chron. 13:19). However, this location would not have removed Him very far from Jerusalem. The only two wildernesses mentioned in the Gospels are the wilderness of Judea, south and east of Jerusalem, and the wilderness north of Perea, where John baptized. The second of these two sites seems to be the more probable place of Jesus' retreat.
 - 3) Charles Swindoll, *The exact location of the town "Ephraim" has been lost to history; however, the name may refer to Ephron, an ancient site near present-day Et-Taibeh, about a day's walk northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus avoided contact with the religious officials for the time being, though not out of fear. He simply had no need for further discussion. The die had been cast. The breaking point had been reached—the point of no return.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *Because of the plot of the chief priests and their allies Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews. Far from it, he went away to the district near the wilderness ... The site of this city is not known for certain, but if its identification with Ophrah be accepted it was about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. Jesus then did not retire to a very great distance. But he went to a place lonely enough for him to be undisturbed. John adds that he stayed there with his disciples. In this difficult period the little band stuck together.*
 - 5) George Beasley-Murray, *No more do we read of many Jews resorting to him and believing on him* (cf. 10:41–42). *Apart from the final week in Jerusalem his public ministry was over. It was no intention of his to allow the Sanhedrin to take him unawares; he determined the time of his departure, not they* (10:17–18).
 - 6) Edward Klink, *Jesus is not running out of fear but is acting by his own authority* (10:18) *and according to his own schedule—"my hour" ...*
 - 7) Kenneth Gangel, *The public ministry had finished and Jesus isolated himself near the Judean desert, a safe haven for the fugitive he had become. We know little about the town of Ephraim, though it may be the Aphairema of First Maccabees 11:34.*
 - 8) Grant Osborne, *God, not the Sanhedrin, would dictate the exact hour, and Jesus alone had authority to surrender his life* (10:17–18). *For the short time remaining he wished to be away from the furor of Jerusalem yet still close enough to return for Passover* (11:55).
2. The arrival of Passover (55-57)
- a. Jews assembled in Jerusalem looking for Jesus (55-56), **Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?"**
 - 1) ... *the Passover of the Jews was at hand ...*
 - a) William Hendriksen, *Verses 55–57 introduce the reader to what must have transpired in Jerusalem about March of the year A.D. 30 ... It was a seven or eight day festival, one of the three great pilgrim-feasts. From all over the country (i.e., the region outside the capital) the people began to wend their way toward Jerusalem ...*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *The Mosaic Law required that the Jews who had become ritually unclean had to purify themselves for one week before participating in this feast* (Num. 9:6–14).

- c) Craig Keener, *The temple courts had countless pools for ritual purification ... Those coming from a great distance, especially in the Diaspora, wanted to arrive early to ensure not only housing but also that they were pure for the festival;*
- d) Kenneth Gangel, *If one does not accept the suggestion that the unnamed feast of 5:1 refers to a Passover, this would be the third and last Passover of Jesus' public ministry, extending it for a period of just over two years. I have already argued, however, for a Passover recognition in 5:1, thereby extending Jesus' ministry over three years, possibly as long as three and one-half. The four Passovers mentioned by the Gospel of John include 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; and 11:55–12:1.*
- 2) *What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?*
- a) Craig Keener, *Although one would expect a pious teacher from Galilee to show up for one of the three biblically mandatory pilgrimage festivals, they may also be aware that he would be in danger there (7:25, 30; 8:59; 10:31, 39; 11:8, 16, 57). Cf. 1 Samuel 10:22.*
- b) Thomas Constable, *These pilgrims wondered if Jesus would attend that Passover, since official antagonism against Him had become common knowledge (v. 57; cf. 7:11). Jesus habitually attended the required feasts and taught in the temple while He was in Jerusalem. However, there had been unsuccessful attempts to stone Him there, so many people wondered whether He would appear at this feast.*
- c) Leon Morris, *After the resolve taken in verse 53 Jesus' enemies were looking for him. "Kept looking" signifies a continuing process. And as they looked for him they kept asking one another whether Jesus would come to the feast ... They considered it unlikely that he would be so foolhardy as to put in an appearance.*
- d) William Hendriksen, *Note that the form of the question is such that the questioner already assumes that it is far more likely that Jesus will not come to the feast. Of course, everyone regretted this, being anxious to see the man who had raised Lazarus.*
- e) Edward Klink, *The narrator depicts them standing in the temple, in the central and populated area, asking one another if Jesus would make an appearance. While the first question reflects the discussion among the people present, the second question reveals their answer, since the question is asked with the emphatic negation subjunctive, the strongest negation in Greek: "Surely he is not coming to the Feast?"*
- b. **The religious leaders had given orders that Jesus must be arrested (57), *Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.***
- 1) Edwin Blum, *Large crowds gathering in the city kept looking for Him. The religious authorities gave orders for anyone to report if he found out where Jesus was so they could arrest Him.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *There was a warrant out for Jesus' arrest. The reader can hardly miss the point that Israel's leaders, who represented the whole nation, had deliberately rejected their Messiah.*
- 3) Leon Morris, *In furtherance of their plan the authorities had commanded that anyone who knew Jesus' whereabouts should disclose the information. This would make anyone who came to know where he was but did nothing about it an accessory, and would thus constrain people to supply information and facilitate arrest.*
- 4) William Hendriksen, *The Sanhedrin was now fully determined to put Jesus to death. From 11:57 it appears that the prevailing sentiment (due to the advice of the Pharisees within the chief council?) was to give the proceedings the semblance of legality: to arrest him.*
- 5) William Barclay, *From the concluding verses of the chapter, it seems that by this time, Jesus had been classed as an outlaw. It may be that the authorities had offered a reward for information leading to his apprehension, and that it was this that Judas sought and received.*
- 6) F. F. Bruce, *The publication of these orders was sufficient to let the residents in Jerusalem know the intentions of the Sanhedrin—"the chief priests and the Pharisees." But the rulers' further intention, to procure his death when once they had him in their power, was probably not a matter of general knowledge.*

SUMMARY

- Craig Blomberg, *The first main section of the body of John's Gospel has now come to a close ... and the stage is set for the last week of Christ's life and the dramatic events that unfold during it.*
- Gary Burge, *Jesus will indeed return to the public square once more during the Passover Feast following his triumphal entry, but only to give an impassioned plea for belief (12:44). No longer will he provide public signs that evoke belief. The next time after this he appears in public, he will be a prisoner.*
- Edward Klink, *The narrator is transitioning the reader to the final stage of Jesus's journey by connecting the narrative time to Passover, for the remainder of the Gospel takes place in connection with the Passover and the true Passover, the death of Christ.*
- Charles Swindoll, *The next time Jesus would encounter the religious authorities of the temple, it would be in an official capacity. Soon He would enter Jerusalem as King Jesus, the Messiah, arriving to claim the throne of Israel and to assume command of His temple.*
- Kenneth Gangel, *When we read a chapter like this and understand the behavior of Mary, Martha, and the disciples, how does our faith compare with theirs? The expectation of hope beyond the grave is not just some eschatological creed, but a life force that ought to engage our hearts and minds on a daily basis.*