

John 11:1-27 – The Resurrection and the Life

Chapter eleven contains Jesus' last "I am" statement of the Gospel of John before the Last Supper. In chapter six, Jesus fed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish. He then said "I am the Bread of Life". In chapter eight, Jesus said "I am the Light of the World". Then in chapter nine, Jesus gave sight to a man born blind. Chapter ten contained two "I am" statements. "I am the door" and "I am the Good Shepherd". In this chapter, Jesus proclaimed "I am the Resurrection and the Life." To back up that statement, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Read John 11:1-16.

What do we know about Lazarus, Mary and Martha? (11:1-2) How is their relationship with Jesus described? (11:3, 5, 11)

The message from the sisters to Jesus is similar to prayers offered by millions of others, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." Similar to chapter four, this was an urgent plea for help. Lazarus was near death. One would think that this was a no-brainer. Jesus was the greatest healer in all the world and he was their friend. What did Jesus say in response to this message? What did Jesus mean by his response? What did Jesus do in response to the message? (11:3-4, 6)

When I got a call from my sister that our mother might not make it to the end of the day, I was out of the house in a hurry and off to see my mother. Two years later when I got a call from my brother that our father might die within hours, I was out of the house in a hurry and off to see my father. Jesus' act of remaining where he was did not seem to fit the actions of someone who loved Lazarus. Why did Jesus delay? Remember what Jesus said in verse 4. There is a profound lesson here. As Sinclair Ferguson put it, "God is not at our beck and call". God is not our servant. We are supposed to be God's servants. If God did everything we wanted then he wouldn't be God. We would be. It is God's will which must be and will be accomplished. It is great when God's will and our wills are in sync but that is not always the case. The plan here was for the glory of God and for Jesus to be glorified. This plan required Jesus to delay two days. It was not what Mary, Martha and Lazarus wanted but it was what God's plan required. God's primary goal is not our comfort and convenience. Sometimes we suffer so that God may be glorified. Many Christians do not accept this. Examine the passage for yourself. Also think about the man born blind and how his blindness and receiving sight was to manifest the works of God.

What did Jesus say to his disciples after remaining where he was for two days? What did the disciples think of Jesus' plan? How did Jesus respond to the disciples' fear? Why wasn't Jesus afraid of the Pharisees? (11:7-10)

Jesus then told his disciples why they were going to Judea. What did Jesus say he was going to do? (11:11-14)

Why did Jesus say that he was glad that he was not there when Lazarus died? (11:15)

Was Thomas' statement to his fellow disciples brave, misinformed or both? (11:16)

Read John 11:17-27.

Jesus had already told his disciples that Lazarus died. When they arrived near Bethany, what additional information about Lazarus' death was revealed in verse 17.

Bethany was only a couple of miles from Jerusalem so there were a number of people from Jerusalem who came to be with Mary and Martha at their time of loss. Why is this fact important? (11:18-19)

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet him. What did Martha say to Jesus? What did Martha mean by "I know that whatever you ask God, God will give to you"? Jesus said that her brother would rise again. Martha had probably heard similar words of comfort from friends and family many, many times in the four days since her brother's death. Jesus wasn't talking about pie in the sky by and by. Jesus was talking about the here and now. What "I am" statement did Jesus make to Martha? What is the significance of this statement? (11:20-26)

Jesus asked Martha if she believed that he was the Resurrection and the Life. How did Martha answer Jesus? Did she really answer his question? (11:26-27)

I have spent a lot of time trying to figure out the exact timing of the events of chapter eleven. I finally came to the conclusion that John did not give us enough information to know the exact timing of events. If it wasn't important for John to tell us, it must not be important to the message of the chapter. One question seems to be on people's mind. Could Jesus have traveled to Bethany in time to heal Lazarus before his death? Jesus said that he was glad that he was not there. Martha and Mary both said "if you had been here". Some people thought that Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying. (11:15, 21, 32, 37)