

Lesson 11
John 11:1-57

THE LAST MIRACLE—THE LAST ENEMY

Memory verse: “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;” (John 11:25 NIV)

The major theme of the Gospel, Jesus' identity as the Son of God, continues dominant in this chapter. It was just as important for Jesus' disciples to grow in their understanding of who He was, and to grow in their faith in Him, as it was for the general public to do so.

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).

The claim of Jesus to be working in complete and conscious union with His Father led the Jews to attempt unsuccessfully to stone Him (John 10:31). But it was His claim to bestow upon believers the gift of eternal life by raising them from spiritual death which led, according to the Johannine narrative, to His crucifixion.

Physical death is the divine object lesson of what sin does in the spiritual realm. As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God and the loss of life which is in God (John 1:4). Jesus has come so that people may live full lives (John 10:10).

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was not our Lord's last miracle before the cross, but it was certainly His greatest and the one that aroused the most response both from His friends and His enemies.

John selected this miracle as the seventh in the series recorded in his book because it was really the climactic miracle of our Lord's earthly ministry. He had raised others from the dead, but Lazarus had been in the grave four days. It was a miracle that could not be denied or avoided by the Jewish leaders.

"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). The "Bethany" in view is the one almost two miles east of Jerusalem (v. 18), not the one in Perea to which the writer referred earlier (John 1:28).

If Jesus Christ can do nothing about death, then whatever else He can do amounts to nothing. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19). Death is man's last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), but Jesus Christ has defeated this horrible enemy totally and permanently.

The emphasis in John 11 is on faith; you find some form of the word *believe* at least eight times in this account. Another theme is “the glory of God” (John 11:4, 40).

How is your faith in facing a dreadful enemy of humanity, the shadow of death?

Scripture Reading: John 11:1-44

To learn in this lesson: 1) Jesus' miracles glorify His Father. 2) Jesus effects resurrection and provides eternal life. 3) Utter depravity of human heart

Discussion Questions:

1) What do we know about the disciples and Jesus' decision when they learned of Lazarus' sickness from verses 1 to 16?

2) What can we learn about Jesus and the two sisters when He comforted them in verses 17 to 40?

3) Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead was indeed a miracle. How is the faith of the spectators affected by this event as recorded in verse 41 to 57?