



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

LESSON 11

John Chapter 11



Brief Recap

As we have seen throughout, John has been steadily building his case that **Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God**, presenting His words and His signs as evidence demanding a verdict: *Who is Jesus?* We began with the eternal **Logos** who became flesh, and since then John has moved us through a carefully designed progression of signs and declarations—water into wine, healing the nobleman’s son, the man at Bethesda, feeding the five thousand, walking upon the sea, and giving sight to the man born blind. Along the way, Jesus has declared Himself the **Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Door, and the Good Shepherd**, while opposition from the religious leadership has steadily hardened (John 1:1-14; 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-18; 6:5-21; 8:12; 9:1-7; 10:7-18).

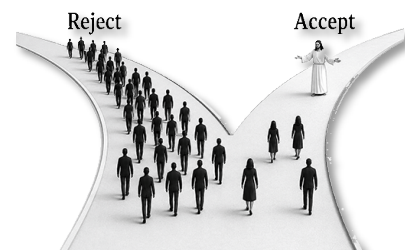


Notice the escalation from the previous chapters: in **John 5, they sought to kill Him; in John 8, they took up stones; and in John 10, they took up stones again**. Yet the evidence has escalated right alongside the opposition. John has brought us through six of his great signs, and now everything is positioned for the seventh and climactic sign—the raising of Lazarus.

John Chapter 11

John 11 brings us to **Bethany**, only about two miles from Jerusalem, where Lazarus—the brother of Martha and Mary—becomes gravely ill. Jesus deliberately delays His arrival until Lazarus has been dead and buried for four days, removing any possibility that what follows could be dismissed as resuscitation or mistaken death. Here Jesus will make one of His greatest declarations—**“I am the resurrection, and the life”**—and then demonstrate the truth of that claim by calling a dead man out of his tomb.

But this miracle produces two radically different responses. **Many believe and accept; the religious leadership rejects and decides Jesus must die**. Remarkably, as we shall see, they do not deny that Lazarus has been raised—they acknowledge that Jesus is performing extraordinary miracles and nevertheless determine to destroy Him. Thus the seventh sign becomes both a magnificent revelation of Christ's glory and the immediate catalyst that moves the narrative toward the Cross.



Seven Signs	Seven "I AM" Statements
1. Water into wine in Cana (2:1–11)	1. I AM the Bread of Life (6:48)
2. Healing at Capernaum (4:46–54)	2. I AM the light of the world (8:12)
3. Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–18)	3. I AM the door (10:9)
4. Feeding the 5,000 (6:5–14)	4. I AM the good shepherd (10:11)
5. Walking on the water (6:16–21)	5. I AM the resurrection and the life (11:25)
6. Healing a blind man in Jerusalem (9:1–7)	6. I AM the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
7. Raising Lazarus in Bethany (11:1–45)	7. I AM the true vine (15:1)

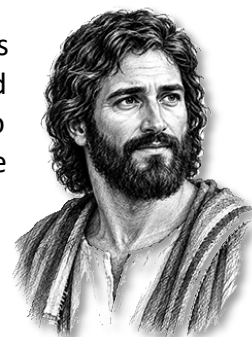
John 11 stands at a major structural threshold in the Gospel. Some scholars divide John's Gospel into two units – Unit 1: Chapters 1-11, and Unit 2: Chapters 12-21. We will see John's pacing slow down dramatically. The first ten chapters cover only brief snapshots of Jesus' ministry, focusing on signs presented as evidence. Now, beginning with Lazarus and then especially Chapter 12, John slows the clock as the Cross approaches. Also, there is a beautiful connection with where we left off in Chapter 10 as Jesus *"...calleth his own sheep by name"* (John 10:3). Here in Chapter 11, we are about to watch the Shepherd stand before a tomb and call one of His sheep **by name**—*"Lazarus, come forth."* (John 11:43).



John 11:1] *"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha."*

The central figure of the chapter is **Lazarus of Bethany**. The name *Lazarus* is an abbreviated form of **Eleazar**, a name meaning "God has helped" or "God is my help." That is the same name as Abraham's servant. There are two men named Lazarus in the New Testament—the Lazarus here and the entirely different Lazarus of Luke 16, whom we will look at later in the lesson.

Bethany was a small village on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, roughly **two miles from Jerusalem**. It has two associated meanings for the name: **"House of Figs"** and **"House of Affliction."**



Lazarus

In the previous lesson, we learned that Jesus had withdrawn beyond the Jordan to the area associated with John's earlier baptizing ministry; now the crisis involving Lazarus will draw Him back to Jerusalem. After repeated attempts against His life, returning to Bethany means returning to **dangerous ground**—something the disciples themselves will immediately recognize.

Lazarus' family was not strangers to Jesus. Luke records Jesus in Martha's home, with Martha serving while Mary sits at Jesus' feet listening to His word; John will shortly make clear that Lazarus also shared an unusually close relationship with Christ (Luke 10:38-42).

Nevertheless, John 11 begins with circumstances that appear to be moving in exactly the wrong direction: Lazarus is sick, Jesus is far away, Jerusalem is hostile, and the situation will soon become humanly irreversible.



John 11:2] *"(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)"*

John identifies Mary by an event he will not actually narrate until **John 12**. John assumes familiarity with the other Gospel accounts (Luke 10:38-42; Mark 14:3-9). Here she is remembered for **what she did at the feet of Jesus**.



John 11:3-4] *“Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”*

The sisters send Jesus a remarkably simple message: **the man He loves is desperately sick**. They do not tell Jesus what to do; they place the need before Him and rest their appeal upon His love for Lazarus. Jesus then reveals something no one in Bethany can yet see—the sickness and approaching death are not the final outcome, but the setting in which the glory of God and the glory of the Son will be displayed.



John 11:5-6] *“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.”*

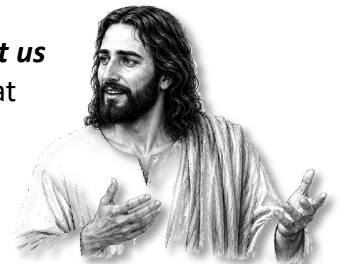


John 11:7-8] *“Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?”*

These verses contain one of the chapter's most important paradoxes: **Jesus loves this family; therefore, He waits**. Bethabara beyond Jordan is approximately a day's journey from Jerusalem. Jesus is deliberately delaying: He knows exactly what is occurring in Bethany and nevertheless remains where He is for two days. His delay is not indifference; it is deliberate, and the reason will become apparent soon.

There is an important historical and cultural detail behind Jesus' delay. Lazarus would ordinarily have been **buried on the day of his death**, with mourning beginning immediately. The first three days were marked by intense mourning, with professional mourners present. By the fourth day, things would have calmed down a bit, and friends and others would be visiting the bereaved family.

After two days of apparent inactivity, Jesus suddenly announces: **“Let us go into Judaea again.”** The disciples immediately understand what that means. Jerusalem has become openly hostile territory. The danger is fresh in their minds, and the prospect of returning to Jerusalem looks almost suicidal. However, Jesus is moving according to the Father's timetable—not the timetable of His enemies.



PATTERN

Two-Day Delay: There is an intriguing biblical pattern (Remez) in the two-day delay. Hosea declares concerning Israel: **“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up...”** Hos. 6:2. John's immediate meaning is straightforward: Jesus waits two literal days so that Lazarus' death will become the setting for the revelation of resurrection power. Yet the pattern—delay followed by restoration and raising up—echoes a recurring biblical rhythm in which apparent divine absence gives way to dramatic restoration (Hos. 6:1-3; John 11:6, 23-26).



John 11:9-10] *“Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”*

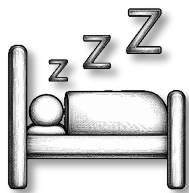
Jesus does not dispute the danger. Instead, He answers with what initially sounds like an observation about daylight: **“Are there not twelve hours in the day?”**

But Jesus' point is larger: **the day has a divinely allotted span**. At the plain level, it is obvious that daylight enables a traveler to see his path. Spiritually, we know there is much more whenever Jesus speaks about light and darkness.

The issue is therefore not merely whether the road ahead is dangerous. The real question is whether one is **walking according to God's light and God's appointed purpose**. Remember when Jesus said: *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4).

 **John 11:11-12]** *"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well."*

Jesus now tells the disciples what has happened in Bethany, but He describes Lazarus' death as **sleep**. The disciples misinterpret His words and literally assume that natural sleep means Lazarus is catching up on his rest.



Throughout Scripture, why does the Holy Spirit Call Death "Sleep"? Scripture repeatedly uses sleep as a metaphor for the believer's physical death. Why?

- ✓ Sleep is harmless — so ultimately is death to the believer.
- ✓ Sleep brings welcome relief — the sorrows of this life are shut out.
- ✓ We lie down expecting to rise again — sleep anticipates awakening.

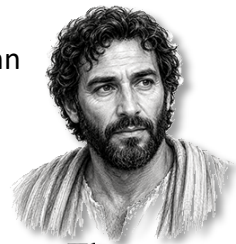
Sleep pictures the ease with which the Lord will awaken us. He simply speaks our name.

 **John 11:13-15]** *"Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."*

Jesus now removes the disciples' misunderstanding and abandons the metaphor: **Lazarus is dead**. Given the disciples' misunderstanding, Jesus makes a startling statement, *"I Am Glad...That I Was Not There."* Jesus is certainly not glad that Mary and Martha are grieving. He is glad for what the disciples are about to learn because He **was not present when Lazarus died**.

 **John 11:16]** *"Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

Thomas is usually remembered for his doubts after the Resurrection, but John 11 gives us another side of the man. He is something of a pessimist in the group. To be fair, Thomas is probably simply articulating what the other disciples are thinking. They know the hostility has escalated—Jesus' enemies are no longer merely debating Him; they intend to kill Him.



Thomas

John identifies Thomas as **"Didymus."** *Thomas* is Aramaic, and *Didymus* is its Greek equivalent; both mean **"twin."** Scripture never identifies the other twin. Keep in mind that Thomas may doubt and lack confidence in the outcome, but he does not lack **courage or devotion to Christ**.



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John 11:17-19] *“Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.”*

Jesus arrives near Bethany to find Lazarus **four days in the grave**. This is what distinguishes Lazarus from the other people Jesus raised from the dead. Jairus's daughter and the widow of Nain's son were recent deaths, and both events occurred in Galilee.

Also, Bethany lay immediately outside Jerusalem, in “enemy turf”—the region where the leadership has repeatedly sought His death, and some of that leadership was present. However, God is building a mixed audience that will prevent the Sanhedrin (Jewish Leadership) from simply discrediting or sweeping away this final great sign of the Messiah.

Four Days from Adam to the Last Adam: “...one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8; cf. Ps. 90:4). There is a larger pattern at play. Lazarus' four days in the grave are suggestive of the human race lying under Adam's sentence of death until the arrival of the Last Adam, who possesses the authority to reverse it (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45). Adam introduced death into the human race; approximately four millennia later, the **Last Adam** arrives and demonstrates His authority over that ancient enemy (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45).



PATTERN

Lazarus can therefore be seen as a picture of fallen humanity:

- **Adam:** death enters the world.
- **Four “days”:** mankind remains under death.
- **Last Adam:** Christ arrives and calls the dead to life.

Additionally, some scholars and students see the history of mankind as resembling God's creation week: approximately **six thousand years of human history followed by Christ's thousand-year Millennial Kingdom—a seventh “day” of rest.**

- **Days 1–4** → Adam to Christ's First Coming
- **Days 5–6** → Church Age and events leading to Christ's return
- **Day 7** → Christ's 1,000-year Millennial reign



John 11:20-21] *“Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”*



John 11:22-24] *“But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”*

As soon as Martha hears Jesus is approaching, she leaves the mourners and goes to meet Him. **Mary remains seated in the house**, while Martha characteristically takes action; Jesus has apparently not yet entered Bethany itself. Her faith is mixed with disappointment: “If *You had been here.*” Martha is both **partially correct and partially incorrect**. She views Jesus as One uniquely favored by God, whom she can ask to intervene, but fails to grasp that she's talking to God Himself.



Martha

When Jesus answers Martha with a simple promise of ***“Thy brother shall rise again,”*** she immediately places that promise into her established theology of ***“the resurrection at the last day.”*** Martha's theology is fundamentally sound. The Old Testament clearly anticipated bodily resurrection, and Jesus Himself had already taught that those in the graves would someday hear His voice and come forth (Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29). Again, her problem is that she believes too little about the One standing in front of her.

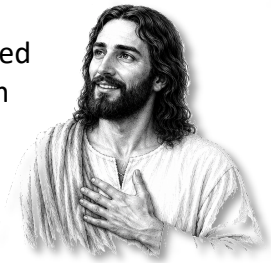
Scripture **does not** present one undifferentiated general resurrection as so many preach. There are **two resurrection categories**, separated by the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15).

- ① **First resurrection:** resurrection unto life. The **first resurrection** of the righteous unfolds in stages. Paul describes this resurrection according to an appointed order—***“every man in his own order”*** (1 Cor. 15:22-24).
- ② **Second resurrection:** resurrection unto judgment. The second resurrection culminates after the Millennium with the unsaved dead appearing before the Great White Throne (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:22-24; Rev. 20:4-15).

Again, Martha understands the broad Old Testament expectation of resurrection ***“at the last day,”*** but Jesus is about to reveal a mystery: **resurrection power is standing directly in front of her.**

 **John 11:25-26]** *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

In the **fifth of John's seven great “I AM” declarations**, strategically placed immediately before the seventh and climactic sign, Jesus redirects her from the event to Himself: ***“I am the resurrection, and the life.”*** This is a very, very fundamental declaration— that is so familiar to Christians that we can easily miss the staggering depth of what Christ is claiming. Verses 25 and 26 address two different conditions:



- ① **Believers who die will live.** For the believer who **dies physically**, death cannot cancel the life Christ has given him; resurrection awaits him (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40; 1 Thess. 4:16).
- ② **Believers who live possess life death cannot destroy.** For the believer who is **living**, physical death may still occur, but the eternal life he possesses can never be extinguished; he will never experience the ultimate death of separation from God (John 5:24; 8:51; Rev. 20:6, 14).

Jesus is asking all believers, ***“Believest thou this?”*** His statement is enormous: **the person who believes in Him possesses a life that death itself cannot terminate** (John 3:16; 5:24; 10:27-29; 11:25-26).



LESSON

Lesson — Christianity's Answer to Death: Every human philosophy and religion eventually collides with the grave, but their answers differ dramatically. **Materialism** sees death as extinction; **Hinduism and Buddhism** place death within a metaphorical cycle of rebirth from which one seeks eventual release; **Islam** anticipates resurrection and judgment, with man's eternal destiny determined before a god who can change his mind. Christianity makes a radically different claim: death is an enemy introduced through sin, and its answer is not extinction, reincarnation, escape, or merely judgment—but **resurrection through Jesus Christ** (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:20-26). Cont'd.

Jesus does not offer Martha a philosophy for coping with mortality. **He offers Himself: “I am the resurrection, and the life.”** Christian hope therefore rests upon a Person who possesses life inherently, entered death Himself, conquered it, and promises bodily resurrection to those who belong to Him. The grave is not merely something Christianity explains—it is an enemy Christ has defeated and will ultimately abolish (John 11:25-26; 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:20-23, 51-57; Rev. 1:18; 21:4).



John 11:27-29] *“She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.”*



John 11:30-31] *“Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.”*



John 11:32] *“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”*

Martha arrived at the very conclusion to which John's signs direct every reader, **“Yea, Lord: I believe...”** Martha then returns home and **secretly** tells Mary: **“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.”**

The moment Mary learns that Jesus is calling, **she moves**. There is no hesitation. Jesus has still not entered Bethany but remains at the place where Martha first met Him. Even though Martha intended her message to Mary to remain private, Mary's sudden departure attracts attention. The mourners assume: **“She goeth unto the grave to weep there.”** So they follow her.



Mary

Mary's first words are identical to Martha's. They know Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' death. But it also reveals how completely they believe the opportunity has passed. They know Jesus as **the One who could have prevented death**. They are about to discover Him as **the One who commands the dead**.

Both Mary and Martha initially see: **Sickness → delay → death → tomb.**

Jesus sees: **Sickness → delay → death → resurrection → glory → belief.**



Modern thinking often assumes faith should survive only when circumstances appear to validate it. Mary and Martha are standing in exactly the opposite situation: **Christ loves them, yet Lazarus is dead; Christ could have prevented it, yet He deliberately delayed.** John 11 teaches mature believers to anchor faith in **who Christ is**, not merely in whether His present actions match what we expected Him to do—Martha's circumstances still look disastrous when she says, **“I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God”** (John 11:5-6, 27).

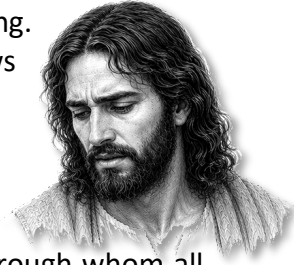




John 11:33-35] *“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.”*

Jesus sees Mary weeping, surrounded by mourners who are also weeping. John does not portray Him as emotionally detached even though He knows the outcome. **Knowing that resurrection is coming does not make the present devastation of death insignificant for anyone.**

The Greek word (embrimaomai) translated ‘groaned’ carries the sense of deep agitation or indignation. Jesus is confronting the human misery produced by death, and His response includes **indignation**. The One through whom all things were created stands inside a world now ravaged by the enemy that Scripture calls **“the last enemy”** (John 1:3; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:26).



“Where have ye laid him?” was not a request for information but a question to draw the mourners toward the place where His glory will shortly be revealed. Also, Jesus is not weeping because the situation is hopeless. **He weeps even though He knows exactly what He is about to do.** His tears therefore reveal something about the heart of God. Christ does not stand outside human suffering merely explaining it; **He enters it** (Isa. 53:3-4; Heb. 4:15).

In Scripture we see Christ weep over **death**, over a **nation rejecting its Messiah**, and as He approaches the suffering through which He will deal with sin itself. Those tears touch the entire human tragedy—sin, unbelief, judgment, suffering, and death (Isa. 53:3-5; Luke 19:41-44; Heb. 5:7). Scripture specifically records Jesus weeping on **three occasions**:

- **At Lazarus' tomb** — sorrow over death. John 11:35.
- **Over Jerusalem** — sorrow over unbelief and coming judgment. Luke 19:41.
- **In His suffering** — strong crying and tears. Heb. 5:7.

These scenes are connected with Isaiah's Messianic description: **“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”** Isa. 53:3.



John 11:36-37] *“Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”*

Jesus' tears immediately produce **two interpretations** among the witnesses. Some see His tears and recognize His love for Lazarus; others look at His earlier miracle of opening the blind man's eyes and wonder why such power did not prevent Lazarus' death. The question exposes the central tension of the chapter: **if Christ loves us and possesses unlimited power, why does He sometimes permit the very thing He could prevent?**



John 11:38-40] *“Jesus therefore again, groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”*

We have finally arrived at the tomb, and John makes the physical reality unmistakable: **Lazarus has been dead four days, the body is decomposing, and a stone seals the cave.**

John again tells us that Jesus is **“groaning in himself.”** The same deep agitation we encountered just a moment earlier. This was a rock-cut burial place, closed by a stone. The similarities to Jesus' own coming burial are impossible to miss.

Jesus gives an unexpected command: **“Take ye away the stone,”** even though He could certainly have removed it Himself. He commands the people standing nearby to perform the work **they are capable of doing**, while reserving for Himself the work only God can do.

Verse 39 allows us to appreciate the KJV's candor. Although the Old English can be difficult to understand sometimes, it is difficult to improve upon its combination of **“majesty”** and **“candor.”**

This is now the third time the four-day condition has been emphasized in the chapter's development. There can be no conspiracy theory, mistaken diagnosis, or premature burial explanation. The seventh sign involves the restoration of a body already in the process of physical corruption (John 11:6, 17, 39).



John 11:41-42] *“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”*

The stone is removed, but before Lazarus is called from the tomb, Jesus deliberately prays **within hearing of the assembled witnesses**. Remarkably, He does not ask the Father to raise Lazarus—He gives thanks that the Father **has already heard Him**.

But why pray audibly? Jesus Himself explains why He speaks this prayer aloud: **“...because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”** Jesus wants the witnesses to understand the meaning of the sign before they see it. There is a strong parallel with **Elijah on Mount Carmel**. Before the fire falls, Elijah prays publicly: **“...let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant...”** (1 Kgs. 18:36). Then: **“Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know...”** (1 Kgs. 18:37).



John 11:43-44] *“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”*

Notice the simplicity: **“Lazarus, come forth.”** Three words and no elaborate ceremony. The authority resides in the Person speaking the words (John 1:1-4; 5:21, 25-29; 11:25, 43).

Then comes John's wonderfully understated statement: **“And he that was dead came forth.”** The dead man contributes nothing—Christ speaks, life returns, and Lazarus responds. What Jesus declared earlier is now visibly demonstrated: **“the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”** (John 5:25; 11:43-44).



Why Did Jesus Say “Lazarus”? Had Jesus not specified Lazarus, every grave might have emptied.

The thought grows directly from Jesus' earlier declaration: ***“the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth”*** (John 5:28-29).

This is the same Voice that called the universe into existence. Creation and resurrection therefore reveal the same authority:

- ✓ Genesis 1 — He speaks, and creation responds.
- ✓ John 11 — He speaks, and death responds.

The Creator who originally gave man life possesses no difficulty restoring life after death (Gen. 2:7; John 1:3-4; 5:21, 26).

But Lazarus emerges with a problem: **He is alive—but still bound.** Lazarus has received life, yet he is still hindered by the remnants of his former condition. Jesus therefore commands the disciples: ***“Loose him, and let him go.”***

The “Other” Lazarus: What Happens After Death?

The raising of Lazarus gives us a brief opportunity to pause and compare him with **other Lazarus in Scripture**, the beggar Jesus describes in Luke 16. Luke 16 is one of Scripture's most revealing passages concerning conscious existence after physical death. This story, told by Jesus, describes an **actual incident rather than an ordinary parable**—notably, Lazarus is personally named.



Luke 16:22–23] *“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”*

The contrast is immediate. Lazarus had nothing in this life, yet after death he is carried to **Abraham's bosom**; the rich man had everything materially yet awakens in torment. It is important to note that Lazarus was not righteous because he was poor, nor was the rich man condemned simply because he was wealthy—Abraham himself was extraordinarily wealthy. The fundamental distinction is their **relationship to God** (Luke 16:19-31).

Also notice this: **death does not end consciousness.** The rich man remembers, speaks, reasons, experiences thirst and pain, recognizes Abraham and Lazarus, and worries about his five brothers still living on earth. Luke 16 would contradict the concept of “soul sleep.” When the KJV says the rich man was **“in hell,”** the Greek word is **Hades**—not Gehenna. The rich man is in conscious torment, but **he has not yet reached the final Lake of Fire.**

“Hell” Is Not One Word in Scripture

The meaning of the word Hell is often lost in English translations or through erroneous teachings. Our English word **“hell”** can represent several different biblical terms; therefore, it should not automatically be treated as referring to the same place. There are four principal terms: **Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, and Tartarus:**

- **Sheol** — is a Hebrew **Old Testament term** for Hades, occurring 65 times in Scripture. Sheol is an intermediate realm. Sheol should not be confused with the ordinary grave (Kever). A grave receives a **body**, while Sheol denotes the realm associated with the departed; Scripture speaks of many graves, but Sheol itself is treated as a singular realm (Gen. 37:35; Num. 16:30-33; Ps. 16:10; Prov. 21:16).

- **Hades** — is the New Testament Greek counterpart to Sheol, again, an intermediate realm.

Hades (Sheol) is divided into **two separate conditions within that intermediate realm**:

- **Abraham's bosom / Paradise** — comfort for the righteous dead.
- **Place of torment** — conscious suffering for the unrighteous dead.

Between them stands “**a great gulf fixed,**” making passage from one side to the other impossible (Luke 16:22-26).

What Happened to Abraham's Bosom AFTER the Cross?

Before Christ's completed work, the righteous dead are pictured in **Abraham's bosom**, the Paradise side of Hades. Following Christ's death and resurrection, this compartment was “**evacuated,**” connecting it with Christ leading captivity captive (Luke 23:43; Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:20). The **Place of torment** still exists, awaiting the Great White Throne judgment.

Please Notice This



The believer's present expectation is therefore different. Paul can now say that to be “**absent from the body**” is to be “**present with the Lord,**” and that departing this life means being “**with Christ**” (2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:21-23).

- **Gehenna — The Final Destination:** Gehenna is **not** Hades. The name comes from the **Valley of the sons of Hinnom**, south of Jerusalem, infamous for the sacrifice of children to Molech. The valley later became associated with continual burning and consequently became an appropriate biblical image for **everlasting judgment** (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; Matt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; Mark 9:43-47).

Hades is temporary. Gehenna is final.

Revelation makes the sequence explicit. At the Great White Throne, “**death and hell [Hades — currently the place of torment] delivered up the dead which were in them,**” after which “**death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.**” Hades itself therefore cannot be the final Hell because Hades is eventually emptied and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

- **Tartarus and the Abyss (abouso)** - Tartarus, appearing in 2 Peter 2:4, is the deepest abyss and is specifically associated with the incarceration of the angels who sinned in the Genesis 6 [flood] episode (Gen. 6:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). In this area of the underworld, we have the **abouso—the bottomless pit or Abyss**—which is associated with demonic beings, the Beast, and Satan's future thousand-year confinement (Rev. 9:1-11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3).

Bottom line: Sheol/Hades describes the intermediate realm of the dead. **Gehenna** points to final everlasting judgment. **Tartarus** identifies a specialized prison associated with fallen angels.



Death Does Not Change the Verdict: Perhaps the most sobering feature of Luke 16 is the “**great gulf fixed.**” Death does not provide another opportunity to reconsider one's relationship with God. The rich man understands his condition, remembers his former life, and even wants Lazarus sent to warn his brothers—but his own destination is already irrevocable (Luke 16:26-31).



John 11:45-46] “*Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*”

The seventh sign has now been completed, and immediately John records the **division it produces**. Many eyewitnesses believe on Jesus; others go directly to the Pharisees and report what happened. After witnessing a man four days dead walk out of his tomb, **the issue is no longer whether there is sufficient evidence—the issue is what people will do with the evidence.**



PATTERN



Remez — The Other Lazarus Predicted This: Our brief aside (pg. 10) on the **other Lazarus** now produces an extraordinary link. In Luke 16, the rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead so that his brothers will believe. Abraham answers: ***“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead”*** (Luke 16:31). Now, in John 11: **A man named Lazarus actually rises from the dead**, but watch what the Pharisees do with the information.

John 11:47-48] *“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”*

The resurrection of Lazarus forces the religious leadership into emergency session. Notice what they **do not** debate: whether the miracle actually happened. They openly acknowledge Jesus' signs; their concern is that if people continue believing Him, **their political-religious position and the nation itself may be threatened by Rome**. Ironically, there is a **stunning historical irony** because the Pharisees determine that Jesus must be stopped because otherwise **Rome may come and destroy their place and nation**. And **thirty-eight years later, Rome does exactly that anyway**.

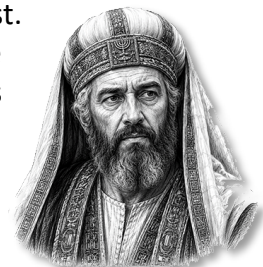


John 11:49-50] *“And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”*

John now introduces **Caiaphas**, the man occupying the office of high priest. His opening words—***“Ye know nothing at all”***—are dismissive: while the council debates what to do, Caiaphas believes the solution is obvious. His argument is brutally pragmatic: ***“it is expedient for us, that one man should die...”*** His logic is straightforward:

Jesus lives → movement grows → Rome intervenes → nation suffers.

Jesus dies → movement ends → nation survives.



Caiaphas



John 11:51-52] *“And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”*

John now pulls back the curtain and explains that Caiaphas has said **far more than Caiaphas understands**. His political proposal becomes an involuntary prophecy: Jesus will indeed die for Israel—but His sacrificial death will reach beyond Israel and ultimately **gather together the scattered children of God**. We need to understand the staggering sovereignty at work: ***“The greatest crime done in the world brings the greatest blessing ever given to the world.”***



John 11:53-54] *“Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.”*

The council's discussion now becomes an official course of action: **Jesus must die**. Yet notice the irony—His enemies have decided His fate, but they still do not control His timetable. Jesus therefore withdraws from public ministry in the immediate Jerusalem area to Ephraim because the appointed hour has not yet arrived; when He finally returns toward Jerusalem, it will be **His decision**, in accordance with the Father's schedule.



John 11:55-57] *“And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.”*

John closes the chapter with **Passover approaching, Jerusalem filling with pilgrims, and everyone asking the same question: Will Jesus come?** This one is different. This is the Passover toward which everything has been moving—the Passover at which **the Lamb of God will Himself be sacrificed** (Ex. 12:1-14; John 1:29, 36; 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; 19:14, 36). The authorities have effectively issued an order for His arrest, yet Jesus will indeed come—not because they have trapped Him, but because the Father's appointed hour is approaching.

Notice how completely the stage has changed since the beginning of the chapter. John 11 began quietly: **“Now a certain man was sick...”** It ends with Jerusalem crowded, **Jesus hunted, Passover approaching, and the Temple buzzing with speculation.**

They are hunting the Lamb at Passover. The chief priests are looking, watching, and waiting for the opportunity to seize Jesus. From the human perspective, political forces are tightening the net. Yet, from the divine perspective, **the Lamb is approaching His appointed sacrifice.** Jesus is actually waiting for **His hour**.

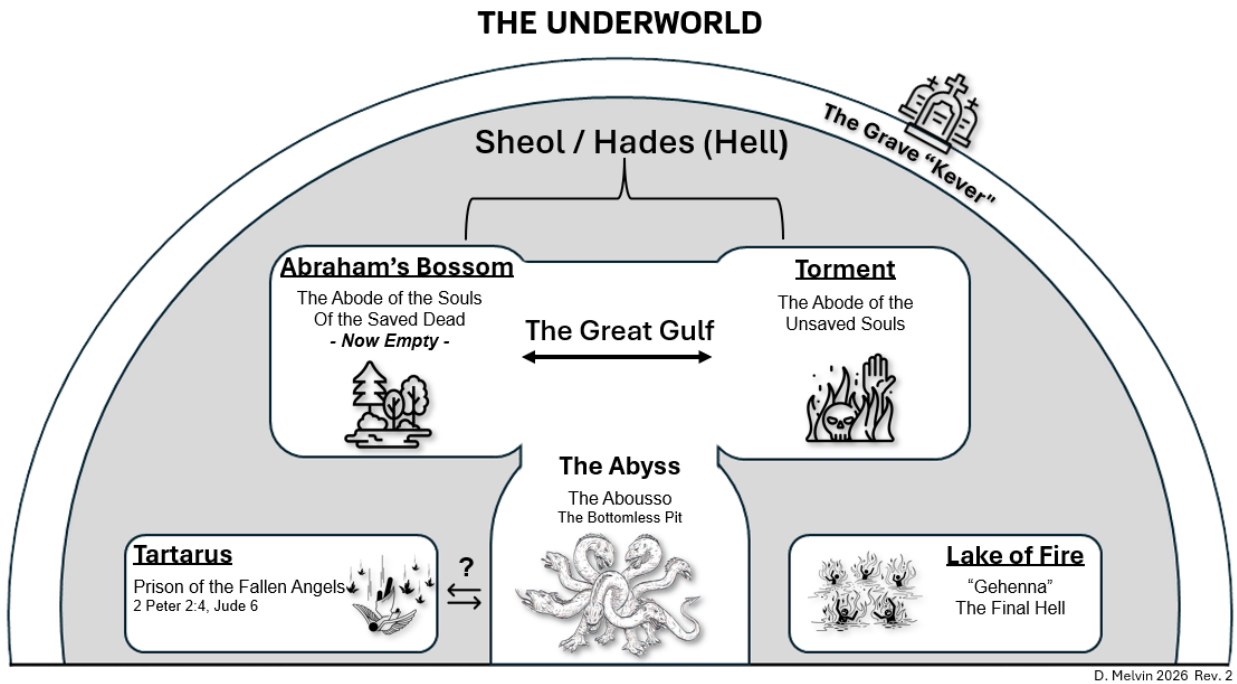


LESSON

Outward Purification and Inward Corruption: Verse 55 presents an uncomfortable contrast between **ritual preparation and spiritual condition**. People are carefully preparing themselves ceremonially while the nation's leadership is plotting murder. Jesus repeatedly confronted exactly this problem: outward religious cleanliness can coexist with profound inward corruption (Matt. 23:25-28). That remains a searching question for believers. We can attend worship, study Scripture, observe traditions, defend doctrine, and maintain impeccable religious form while allowing resentment, pride, ambition, or hardness to remain untouched inside. God has never been satisfied with ceremonial cleanliness detached from the heart (Ps. 51:6-10; Isa. 1:11-18; Mic. 6:6-8).

Next Lesson: Read John Chapter 12. The rest of the Gospel of John will focus on the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Appendix:



JOHN CHAPTER ELEVEN

M A H S U M Y D I D L E N P E H
 T N E A A B H N D E V I L S N S
 L E E R D O L B I A E A V I M A
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AWAKE	LOVEST
BETHANY	MARTHA
BROTHER	MASTER
CERTAIN	NIGHT
DEATH	PLACE
DIDYMUS	PLAINLY
FIFTEEN	SISTERS
GRAVE	SLEEP
HADST	SPOKEN
HASTILY	STONE
HOURS	THOMAS
INTENT	TWELVE
JUDAEA	WEEPING
LAZARUS	WHOSE
LIGHT	WORLD