

The death of Lazarus

John 11 v 1-27

Setting the scene...

We arrive at chapter 11 having had:

A Passover feast in chapter 2...

A year later, another Passover feast in chapter 6

And now chapters 11-20 take place another year later, and again at Passover.

So this shows us that Jesus' ministry took place over three years.

- Welcome to section three of Jesus' ministry!
- Chapters 11 - 20: the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead through to Jesus' resurrection after his death on the cross.

These chapters contain a lesson for us on how to live life now before Jesus returns.

So the chapters create a picture of:

- ch 11 = Life (Lazarus raised by Jesus)
- ch 12 = Death (Jesus predicts his death)
- chs 13-17 = Life before Jesus' return
- chs 18-19 = Death (the crucifixion of Jesus)
- ch 20 = Life (the resurrection of Jesus)

In this section the scene is set for the amazing miracle to come...



Start Here

Chapter 11

- ¹ Now a man named Lazarus was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.
- ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay ill, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)
- ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is ill.'
- ⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This illness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.'
- ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
- ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days,
- ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judea.'
- ⁸ 'But Rabbi,' they said, 'a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?'

- ⁹ Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the day-time will not stumble, for they see by this world's light.'
- ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.'
- ¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.'
- ¹² His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.'
- ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.
- ¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead,
- ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'
- ¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

The dead will be raised!

Verses to highlight:

⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This illness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.'

¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'

Once again we see how carefully John has written his account, in order to demonstrate who Jesus is!

Why does the miracle happen?

Belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the main theme of John's book.

These verses therefore explain the purpose of the miracle:

▼ 4: Glory...

and

▼ 15: Faith!

Jesus tells the disciples in advance, the purpose of the miracle they are about to see.

So, if we now see this miracle through Jesus' eyes, what should we be asking ourselves?

- 1) How do the events reveal the glory of both God and Jesus?
- 2) How does this miracle strengthen the disciples' faith?

This takes us back to Jesus' first recorded miracle, in chapter 2 v 11: '[This is] the first of the signs, through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.'

⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days,

¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.'

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead,

John chapter 5 v 28-29

'Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.'

What is so puzzling about v 6?

Jesus delays setting off for two days...

We will see that by the time Jesus gets to Lazarus, he has been in his tomb for four days! **v 39**

This means that Jesus *deliberately* delayed, so that by the time He reaches His friend, Lazarus is a rotting corpse!

What did Jesus mean by verse 11?

Jesus sees all of our deaths as just temporary 'sleep' before His 'second coming', when He will return and awake everyone for the final judgement day.

Where have we seen this before?

Remember ch 5 vs 28,29

Was Lazarus physically dead?

Jesus spells it out... **v 14**

We return to the story...

- ¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.
- ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,
- ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.
- ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.
- ²¹ 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'
- ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.'
- ²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'
- ²⁴ Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'

- ²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;
- ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'
- ²⁷ 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

Verses to highlight:

18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,

19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

21 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.'

23 Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

What does this section tell us about

Lazarus and his two sisters?

Lazarus was clearly a well-known 'big fish'. Many people had attended his funeral.

Mary and Martha were supported by many people.

Martha has the faith in Jesus to say, 'If only you had been here!'

vs 21,22

What does Jesus tell her will happen?

Martha believes in the final resurrection on the last day (the second coming)! But, as yet, she hasn't quite grasped the full extent of Jesus' power! v 23

Who does Jesus say He is,
and what does belief in Him bring?

²⁴ Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'

²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

²⁷ 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

- Jesus is God! He uses God's name for Himself! 'I am'
- As God, He is the resurrection and the life

This refers to the resurrection at the end of time (when Jesus returns known as the second coming). This is what Martha has referred to in v 24.

At the end of time we will be raised, physically, by Jesus... and if we have put our trust in Him, we will live with Him forever.

So what does this mean?

Though our bodies may die and rot as they wait for the second coming, our soul will live with Jesus in Paradise.

How does Martha respond to Jesus?

She believes Jesus is Lord... the Messiah... the Son of God.

Who do we believe
Jesus is?



Summing up...

The purpose of chapter 11 is to explain that God will be glorified through the death and resurrection of Jesus... and that we too need to believe...

Jesus' words in verses 25,26 are a good summary:

'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

A thought to mull over...

How would belief in Jesus change our lives for the better?

John 11 vs 1-27

¹ Now a man named Lazarus was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay ill, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) ³ So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is ill.' ⁴ When he heard this, Jesus said, 'This illness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.' ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷ and then he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judea.' ⁸ 'But Rabbi,' they said, 'a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?' ⁹ Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the day-time will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.' ¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.' ¹² His disciples replied, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.' ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' ¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' ¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than

two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. ²¹ 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.' ²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴ Martha answered, 'I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' ²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷ 'Yes, Lord,' she replied, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'

Next time...

Jesus orders the opening of a dead man's grave, and causes an almighty stink...!

The dead are raised to life!

John 11 vs 28-57

Setting the scene

Jesus had delayed going to the aid of his sick friend Lazarus, who then dies.

We will now see an amazing miracle from Jesus, to show God's glory, and enable people to believe in Him.

Verses 40,42 highlights this:

Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?' v 40

[Jesus said to God] 'I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' v 42

This section breaks into three parts:

- 1) Jesus' reaction at the death of Lazarus shows Jesus' humanity and love
- 2) Jesus' raising of Lazarus from death shows Jesus' divinity and power
- 3) The Jews' plot to kill Jesus - His death 'for the nation'

As we read, let's ask ourselves:

- How do these events reveal God's glory?
- How does this help us to believe?

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here,' she said, 'and is asking for you.'

²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

The man Jesus and His love

How did Jesus react when He saw Mary crying?

He was **'deeply moved'** (The Greek word for when horses snort in rage, as they go into battle. In other words, furious anger!)

Also **'troubled'** (Stirred up/churned up inside)

He 'wept' ▽ 35

What was the conclusion of the Jews?

They could see Jesus loved Lazarus, but wondered why Jesus hadn't saved him. ▽ 36,37

What does this teach us about Jesus?

The combination of anger/anxiety/grief shows Jesus' humanity and His deep love and care for His friends. He is:

- furious at death in God's world
- stirred up at the hurt that death causes
- genuine in His grief at the death of a friend

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved** in spirit and **troubled**.

³⁴ 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then 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 have kept this man from dying?'

Verses to review:

²¹ 'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

³⁷ But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Jesus' reaction to the death of Lazarus also shows us what God is like:

- He is a God of love, care and concern.
- He shows compassion, including anger at death in the world (the result of rejecting God).
- He knows grief - God understands what impacts us.

But the question remains -
can Jesus do anything about death?

Martha raises the issue in **v 21**,
as does Mary in **v 32**,

And then the Jews ask the question
in **v 37**.

We carry on...

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

³⁹ 'Take away the stone,' he said. 'But, Lord,' said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there **four days**.'

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?'

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me.'

⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.'

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'

⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'

- Remember: this event is 'for God's glory' v 4 and '... so that you may believe' v 15

Jesus - The powerful Son of God

We've just seen Jesus claim to be the resurrection, the one who will call everyone, even from their graves, to the final judgement day. (ch 11 vs 25-27)
He also claimed to give spiritual life to his followers today so that:
v 25: '...the one who believes in me will live, even though they die.'

Mary and Martha knew Jesus could prevent death.

But what is the state of Lazarus?

- Dead and probably embalmed. (Body preparation would take place on the day of death – so the body would have been closely examined, prepared and wrapped all in the same day.)
- Four days in a tomb – rotting.

Can Jesus bring life even from this rotting state?

Yes! And if Jesus can do this with Lazarus... then surely He can raise the dead from their graves across all time?!

Responses to the miracle

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many signs.

⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.'

- This was a very public funeral. It takes place just two miles from Jerusalem and many senior
- Jews will have been there. They now respond...

How?

'many of the Jews... believed in him.'

But some report the events to the Pharisees **v 46**

How do the Pharisees respond?

Even His greatest enemies don't say: 'He must have pulled a fast one!'

Instead they have a panic meeting! **vs 47,48**

They acknowledge it is yet another 'sign' from Jesus, like the healing of the crippled man, or the man born blind. The Pharisees are clearly worried that everyone will believe in Him! **v 48**

Their response reveals what really matters to them...

Position versus Truth!

So what are the Jewish leaders' worried about?

- The loss of the Temple (the place where God's relationship with His people was kept up both by His presence and by the system of sacrifices).
- And the loss of the nation (they are after all, God's people... His chosen race).

What is the high priest's answer?

Caiaphas announces that it is better for the Jewish leaders that one man dies for* the people! ▽ 50

Caiaphas' plan is that Jesus should die, rather than everyone perish.

In ▽ 51 John tells us what is actually going on.

It's a prophecy from God – Jesus will die on behalf of the nation!

And not just for the Jewish nation but for *'the scattered children of God'*.

Jesus died on the cross as a substitute in the place of the people. We will see this in chapter 18...

How do the Jewish leaders respond?

They plot to kill Jesus ▽ 53

48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.'

49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all!

50 You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.'

51 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,

52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

* The key word is 'for' – this means, literally, 'on behalf of'.



What just happened is both crucial and really ironic. Caiaphas wanted to murder Jesus. However, without realizing it, he has prophesied Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus is going to die in the place of the people - He is to be a substitute. This is all part of God's plan. His death on the cross was going to accomplish everything the Temple pointed to - everything the Jews were worried about losing. (see v 48)

Unlike the religious ceremony and sacrifices at the Temple, Jesus' death on the cross brings life, and brings those who believe into the family/people of God.

We will see later in John that the cross:

- pays once and for all for God's just anger at our sin
- brings eternal life for a forgiven people
- is available to all people everywhere

The death and resurrection of Jesus is what it's all about!

- It's not about us being good enough or being born into it!
- It's not about what we do... it's what Jesus has done!
- He died as a substitute on our behalf, so that we would not perish under God's judgement.
- It's about accepting in faith and trusting that the cross is all we need.

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover.

⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, 'What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?'

⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

So Jesus withdraws to a village near the wilderness. We don't know exactly how long for, just that the disciples are with Him.

The Passover is coming and the chief priests have given orders to the people: 'Report Him so that we can arrest Him.'

John 11 vs 28-57

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. 'The Teacher is here,' she said, 'and is asking for you.' ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. ³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then 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 have kept this man from dying?' ³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ 'Take away the stone,' he said. 'But, Lord,' said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.' ⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?' ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' ⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and

let him go.' ⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.' ⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.' ⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. ⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, 'What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?' ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Coming next...

The scene is set and Jesus' hour has come...

Life comes through death...

John 12 vs 1-26

Introduction

Last time we saw that Jesus came to bring life through his death.

This is the key point of this section of John's Gospel. The life Jesus brings is possible only through his death on the cross. It begins (chapter 11) and ends (chapter 20) with resurrection life (Lazarus in chapter 11 and Jesus in chapter 20).

Resurrection life is only possible through Jesus' death - this is explained in chapter 12 and recorded in chapters 18,19.

The end of chapter 11 makes it clear that the Jewish leaders are even more determined to kill Jesus. Rather than running away, Jesus is in total control, knowing that he has come to die, in Jerusalem, at the time of Passover.

Chapter 12 is made up of six sections. The first three are in this section, and the last three in the next.

- 1) Jesus' death and Mary's devotion (vs 1-11)
- 2) Jesus' death and his royal identity (vs 12-19)
- 3) Jesus' death and life for the world (vs 20-26)

Chapter 12

- 1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.
- 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.
- 3 Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Mary's devotion

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,

⁵ 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.'

⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.'

⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'

What was the cost for Mary?

- 1 denarii = a day's wages... so her humble, generous action is the equivalent of an entire year's salary!
- Imagine the state of feet in open-toed sandals in a dry and dusty country, with open sewers! The lowest servant washed the feet of a guest, on arrival at a house.
- A woman's head remained covered – she would only show her hair to her husband...
- But Mary blows a fortune and wipes Jesus' feet with her hair! **v 3**

Why does Mary do this?

She knew who was visiting her house – the creator of the universe!

v 8

She was also grateful for Jesus raising her brother back to life!

Mary's action points us once again to the way in which Jesus will bring life – through His death! **v 7**

So why does Mary give so much?

Because Jesus' death on the cross was going to bring life for His people.

Is Mary's action an example to be followed?

- Given who Jesus is, this is a totally understandable thing to have done - to give herself totally to Him.
- It is the sort of response Jesus provokes when we realize just how thankful to Him we should be for the eternal life He brings us.

In contrast... let's look at Judas - what do we learn from him?

- Judas was a thief and was about to betray Jesus. vs 4 & 6.
- He doesn't recognize Jesus as King... nor the value of what Jesus has done. He'd rather have money than Jesus.

The chief priests' reaction

How are the chief priests
like Judas?

They want to bury the evidence about Jesus, rather than face its consequences.

It's comical! The chief priests plan to kill Lazarus, who they know has just been raised to life! Imagine: *'Let's kill him – so that he is dead again!'*

Why do they want to do this?

The high priest's power over the people was crumbling... and they were more bothered about their influence than the truth.

Mary points to Jesus' death even if she doesn't realize it!

Jesus knows:

- He is going to the cross
- that Judas will betray Him
- that the life He will bring is only possible through His death

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well,

¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

Jesus' death and his royal identity

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!'

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written:

¹⁵ 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'

This section contains two important Old Testament references. Both have to do with Jesus' royal identity. John wants us to know that the Man who is on His way to the cross is the King - God's Messiah! Verse 13 quotes Psalm 118 v 26. This psalm was sung by pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem for Passover. They were calling on Jerusalem to 'make way' for the conquering royal Messiah who triumphed over all His enemies.

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.'

Verse 15 quotes Zechariah chapter 9 v 9. This was written between 518 and 520 BC and is clearly prophesying about the coming Messiah:

'Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

- If you rode on a horse - you were symbolizing an act of WAR
- If you rode on a donkey - you were symbolizing an act of PEACE

So - the King of Peace is coming... but we know... to go to His death!

16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word.

18 Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him.

19 So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'

What a contrast to Mary's grateful behaviour to Jesus in vs 1-9!

After the resurrection, the disciples realized how Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

So what is the point that John wants us to grasp?

Jesus is going to His death in Jerusalem as God's King – the promised Messiah!

How do the Pharisees react?

- We get more proof that Jesus had very publicly raised Lazarus from the dead!
- The news of the miracle had spread... **v 17** (Lazarus had been raised from the dead just two miles from Jerusalem... right under the noses of the religious leaders.)
- They panic – saying '**...this is getting us nowhere.**' **v 19**
- They are terrified they are losing their influence: '**Look how the whole world has gone after him!**'

So what is the point John wants us to see?

- That the Pharisees are intent on 'burying the evidence' rather than facing the facts and worshipping their Messiah.

Jesus' death and life for the world

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.

²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.'

²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'

Jesus now talks specifically about his death and what it will achieve.

The Greeks represented the educated and intelligent of the world. So as they now come to Jesus, it's a picture of the whole world (not just the Jews) coming to Jesus.

The trigger for His death

What does Jesus announce as the Greeks come and ask to see Him?

His 'hour has come ...' We've been waiting for this moment from the beginning of John:

John 2 v 4: 'My hour has not yet come.'

- Jesus' death is the hour of His glory!! Through His death, He will enable people from all nations to know God!

²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

The need for His death

In order for Jesus to achieve His mission, He must die. Just like a seed goes into the ground in order to be fruitful – so Jesus' death is essential to bring us eternal life.

The result from His death

The outcome of Jesus' death will be '*many seeds*'! What a contrast to when we die... we physically rot... but His death generates a massive harvest (eternity for those who trust in Him).

The model of His death

A few moments earlier the crowd were rejoicing in their Messiah, but what will it really mean to follow this King?

Jesus talks of His death as a model of how we are to follow Him... verse 25 is about Him and us.



What do these verses mean?

It's all about who is at the centre of our lives.

Jesus says we are to hate life lived with me at the centre... the Bible calls this sin. It is why Jesus had to die for each one of us to be made right with God.

So - hate the sin of not living life with Jesus at the centre.

This is not about Jesus being a 'spoilsport' - but rather about us grasping that Jesus is God... and that our life should honour Him.

We need to realize that my life lived for me is sin!

Remember the definition of sin - let's read John chapter 5 vs 22,23 again:

'... the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.'

But is following Jesus all 'rosy'?

- Following Jesus means going where He goes. As we've seen, that will mean opposition.

vs 25,26

- Remember verses 10,11:
- 'So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.'

- At the same time, following Jesus leads to being honoured by the Father! In other words - being right with God, for eternity.

Take time to think...

Having just read the challenge of chapter 12, here are some personal questions to think through.

- What is it going to look like for you to 'hate' this life?
- What are the benefits of 'losing my life'?
- Why is it worth it, based on verse 26? **'My Father will honour the one who serves me.'**
- Is there a better deal than that?!

What is clear, is that these questions are vitally important... in fact, Jesus' answers are life-changing... it's why, when Mary saw who Jesus is, she honoured him totally.

Chapter 12 v 3:

'Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.'

John 12 vs 1-26

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about half a litre of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.' ⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him. ¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!' ¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written: ¹⁵ 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king

is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.' ¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. ¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!' ²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.' ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ²³ Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

Next time...


We've heard a lot about Jesus' death leading to his glory... but how?

Why Jesus must die...

John 12 v 27-50

Setting the scene...

Last time we saw that John 12 is a chapter all about Jesus' death. Jesus brings life through His death.



John 12 explains for us what Jesus' death achieves. It is made up of six sections. We've seen:

- 1) Jesus' death and Mary's devotion (vs 1-11)
- 2) Jesus' death and His royal identity (vs 12-19)
- 3) Jesus' death and life for the world (vs 20-26)

Now we move to:

- 1) Jesus' death and the defeat of Satan (vs 27-36)
- 2) Jesus' death and the people's blindness (vs 37-43)
- 3) Jesus' death and light... or darkness (vs 44-50)

Jesus' death and the defeat of Satan

²⁷ 'Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

²⁸ **Father, glorify your name!** Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.'

What is Jesus agonizing over?

His death... but He knows that this is the **'very reason'** why He came.

▾ 27

What is Jesus' priority?

Jesus says, **'Father, glorify your name!'** ▾ 28a

How does God respond?

The voice from heaven underlines that this is a key moment in the life and work of Jesus. ▾ 28b

It is hard to imagine that Jesus' death on the cross - in weakness and shame - might be the moment of God's glory!
God speaks here in order to show us that this is how He will receive glory - it really is His plan! v28b

Judgement

How can this be possible?

Jesus will be gloried in His death:

- As the 'prince of this world' is driven out. **v 31**
- As Jesus draws people to Himself. **v 32**

How can these things only be accomplished through the death of Jesus?

As Jesus dies on the cross we see the judgement and anger of God, for *our* sin, fall on Jesus. The judgement Jesus takes brings freedom from judgement, for those who believe in Him.

²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine.'

³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

This is the point where the world goes one of two ways:
...The world turns away from God - through rejecting the cross...

OR

...The world turns to God - recognizing Jesus' supreme sacrifice... for all time.

Victory

Who does Jesus defeat?

Let's look again at v 31...

'... the prince of this world' (Satan)

- The only 'hold' that Satan has over us is the fact that God should punish us for our sin...
- But once the price for our sin has been paid in full on the cross... Satan has lost his hold over us

Salvation

Through His death!

- 'I ... will draw all people to myself.' ... So it's not just for the Jews then.
- ... And that means people from all over the world will become believers and members of God's family through the death of Jesus on the cross.

As we have already seen, even before He is arrested Jesus knows how He will die. He is in control of His plan.

³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

A quick summary

How have we seen God will glorify His name?

- Judgement! v 31a: 'Now is the time for judgment on this world ...'
- Victory! v 31b: '... now the prince of this world will be driven out.'
- Salvation! v 32: 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

³⁴ The crowd spoke up, 'We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain for ever, so how can you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this "Son of Man"?' ←

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, 'You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.' ←

Satan is left powerless by the cross

Paul records this in his letter to the Colossians later in the New Testament:

Colossians 2 v 15:

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

How does the crowd respond?

They want to know who the 'Son of Man' is. **v 34**

- Jesus' response shows there is a real urgency.
- The prospect of judgement, if they reject Jesus, is real. He appeals to them to believe and so come into his saving 'light'.

On the basis of what Jesus' death achieves, what does Jesus say to the crowd?

He tells them they need to respond. **v 35**

Jesus' death and the people's blindness

³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.' When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

³⁷ Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

³⁸ This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet: 'Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them.'

What was the reaction of the crowd to all that Jesus did?

They still would not believe in Him.

Why is this such a serious warning?

If we go on rejecting Jesus' truth there will come a point where we get the outcome our sins deserve – judgement from God, for ever.



Let's take a look at the two sections of Isaiah that Jesus highlights to explain the crowd's response:

Section One

700+ years before Jesus' life, Isaiah had prophesied that God would powerfully reveal who Jesus was.

Isaiah 53 v 1

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

(This is what John quotes in ch 12 v 38)

This is a key quote. Isaiah tells us that God reveals His work in and through the death of Jesus.

What we will see is that God's 'arm' has now been revealed to all... not just to the Jews... through the lifting up of Jesus on the cross...

... but some will reject, just as we have seen the Pharisees reject both the signs of Jesus and His word.

Section Two

John 12 v 40 (paraphrasing Isaiah 6 v 10)

He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and I would heal them.

In Isaiah 6, God explains why so few would respond to the prophet Isaiah... and the reason is shocking... the hearts of some people are so hardened that they lose the opportunity to even see!

In other words, God had promised to respond to their unbelief by closing their eyes, blocking their ears and deadening their hearts. Now this is being fulfilled...

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue;

⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

Take a moment - Can we see ourselves being like those in verse 43?

Is the fear of what your friends might say more important than being right with God?!

How can Isaiah say these things?

Isaiah knew how glorious Jesus, the Saviour, would be... **v 41** and yet he also prophesied what would happen to Jesus, and how people would respond.

Isaiah makes clear what is to happen to those who have made a decision that they will not believe!

Yet, many do believe. What stops them

'openly acknowledging their faith', though?

They fear:

- The Pharisees
- Being thrown out of the synagogue

Why were they

so fearful of this?

Being put out of the synagogue would impact every area of life. You'd lose your friends, your business contacts and any respect you had. It'd be like picking up a serious criminal record.

Verse 43 sums it up: they were more bothered about what people thought of them than being right with God.

By doing this, who were they rejecting?

Jesus - the creator of the world. What a ridiculous thing to do!

Jesus' death and light... or darkness

44 Then Jesus cried out, 'Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.'

45 The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.

46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

47 'If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.'

48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.'

What does belief in Jesus show?

You believe in the one who sent Him (God). **v 44**

Why is Jesus the light?

Because belief in Jesus is seeing God, who sent Him. **v 45**

What is Jesus' offer?

It's an invitation to all... to come into His light and be rescued from the darkness. **v 46**

If we reject Jesus – who are we rejecting?

God!

To stay in the darkness is a very dangerous position to be in.

vs 47-49

But to trust in Him brings eternal life. **v 50**

Conclusion

Chapter 12 has been all about the death of Jesus.

We have seen:

- a right response to Jesus (remember Mary washing his feet in vs 1-11)
- the royal identity of who is going to the cross (vs 12-19)
- the result of Jesus' death - life! (vs 20-26)
- God's judgement dealt with (vs 27-35)
- a serious warning for those who refuse to believe (vs 36-43)
- ... and an appeal to come out of darkness and into the light (vs 44-50)

Personal Questions...

- What have you learned about the death of Jesus?
- Are you in the light... or are still rejecting Him... in favour of the darkness?

John 12 vs 27-50

²⁷ 'Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. ³⁴ The crowd spoke up, 'We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain for ever, so how can you say, "The Son of Man must be lifted up"? Who is this "Son of Man"?' ³⁵ Then Jesus told them, 'You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.' When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. ³⁷ Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet: 'Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' ³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰ 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn - and

I would heal them.' ⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. ⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved human praise more than praise from God. ⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, 'Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. ⁴⁷ 'If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.'

What comes next?

The Servant King...

the Word

one to one

The Word One to One

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