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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

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**“LET US ALSO GO, THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM.”**

**John 11:1-23**

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

***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 11:3, "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."***

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is the last and greatest miracle during the active ministry of Jesus. The locale is the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, in Bethany, a village on the Mount of Olives on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Bethany was one place where Jesus commonly lodged when in Jerusalem (Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11). Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were friends of Jesus. Many times, on His way to and from Jerusalem, Jesus stayed with them in their home. Bethany is a village about two miles east of Jerusalem on the lower eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. It is located on the winding road from Jericho to Jerusalem. The notable events that occurred there include the raising of Lazarus from the dead and the anointing of Jesus by Mary, which was symbolic of His death (Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8). Mary brought the expensive perfume (that cost a year’s wages) and poured it on Jesus. Judas Iscariot complained, because it was expensive and could have been sold to give to the poor. Jesus said she would be remembered forever for this. Unlike Martha and Mary, nothing specific is known concerning Lazarus’s character. However, his sisters knew that Jesus loved him. This Lazarus should not be confused with the beggar who died and was carried to “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:20–22).

***John 11:4, "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."***

When he received the message, Jesus vowed that the sickness [would] not end in death but would end in the glory of God. As in the case of the blind man (9:1-3), these negative circumstances were not the result of sin; they were for the purpose of glorifying Jesus. If someone says that a Christian walking with the Lord can’t become ill or contract a disease, that person is simply wrong. Lazarus’s sickness was not a means of punishment, not a sign of rebellion. Rather, it had a spiritual purpose.

***Philippians 1:12 “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”***

***Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”***

***John 11:5, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."***

***John 11:6, "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place he was."***

John tells us that Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus, and they knew of his love for them. They shared an intimate relationship with him. But, in spite of this, Jesus stayed two more days in the place where he was. Knowing that Jesus had performed two previous resurrections of the widow’s son (Luke 7:11-17) and the ruler’s daughter (Luke 8:40-56), Mary and Martha, friends, and disciples of Jesus, whom he loved, they knew he had the power to heal their brother, so they sent an urgent message to Jesus. They sent word to Jesus immediately to come and heal Lazarus. Lazarus has not become sick because of any sin in his life. This sickness is to glorify God. This sickness of Lazarus will glorify the Father and the Son. When Jesus heard of Lazarus’s illness, though He intentionally tarried in order to enhance the miracle. This seems as if Jesus doesn't care, but He knows the outcome before it happens. Jesus deliberately waited until Lazarus was dead so that the glory of the Lord could be shown in Lazarus. His delay appeared to contradict his promise of healing. However, it was because he loved them that he delayed his arrival. This passage demonstrates an important theological truth regarding prayer. In our times of struggle, we want God to respond immediately. When he doesn’t, we’re tempted to assume he doesn’t care. But the reality is that we don’t understand his timing or his purposes because his ways are not our ways.

***Isaiah 55:8-9***

***8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.***

***9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

***Psalm 27:14 “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”***

There’s a method to his (apparent) contradictions. He responds as he does because he loves us and because he’s seeking his glory. Trust him in his delays. Why does Jesus linger two days? He is “beyond the Jordan” where John baptized (10:40) and not in Judea (v. 7). The journey to Bethany would require about one day. (It was approximately 18 miles minimum.) A summary of the four days helps answer the above question: On the first day, the messenger travels from Bethany east across the Jordan to find Jesus. The next two days Jesus lingers (v. 6). On the fourth day Jesus travels west across the Jordan to Bethany. Since Lazarus had already lain in the grave four days when Jesus arrived (vv. 17, 39), he must have already been in his grave when the messenger reached Jesus at the end of the first day. (Jews normally buried a person on the day of the death.) Thus, Jesus did not tarry two days waiting for Lazarus to die. Some Jews apparently believed that the soul hovered near a body for three days hoping to reinhabit the body. By the fourth day they believed the soul abandoned hope and left. Perhaps Jesus tarried two days so that the resurrection would take place after the fourth day—and convince even those who felt His earlier resurrection miracles could be explained by this theory about the soul. (The others had taken place shortly after death, or in the case of the son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7, and Jairus’s daughter in Matthew 9, apparently on the very day of death.)

***John 11:7, "Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again."***

***John 11:8, "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"***

Finally, Jesus said, Let’s go to Judea again. His disciples looked at one another and wondered if their Rabbi was losing it. Judea was where people had wanted to kill him. You remember, the last time Jesus was in this area, the Jewish leaders tried to take Him and stone Him. Jesus is not afraid, however, and tells His disciples to go with Him. The disciples are not for protection. Jesus didn't need protection, but so they might see the glory of God. The disciples are afraid for themselves and for Jesus. But though one can understand their concern, the disciples apparently hadn’t noticed that a lot of folks were having trouble seizing Jesus (7:30-32, 44-46; 8:20; 10:39). The Son of God—not the angry religious leaders—was sovereign over his ministry timetable.

***John 11:9, "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."***

***John 11:10, "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."***

Jesus makes a point here, that He must work while it is day. The Lord really is saying here that time is running out and we must work while it is still light. In the dark ages, there were very few saved. Jesus is saying while the Light (Jesus) is still with you, we must work. Night is coming when no man can work. Jesus is saying, here, that there will come a time of spiritual darkness when it will be difficult to work. Jesus told them that the day—the time of his public, earthly ministry—was the opportunity for action. While Jesus, the light of this world, was with them, they could walk and not stumble. Later, they would have the light of the Holy Spirit’s presence. But to function apart from Jesus is like walking around at night. Operating without his illumination will cause you to trip and wind up on your face.

***John 11:11, "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."***

Jesus could have gone earlier and touched Lazarus and made him whole, and it would have been like thousands of other healings that Jesus had done that they had gotten so used to that it had become commonplace. This miracle that Jesus would perform over Lazarus would show that Jesus had power over death, that Jesus had resurrection power. Jesus says he sleeps meaning that Lazarus was dead. The reason they needed to return to Judea was because Lazarus [had] fallen asleep and needed waking. Death is often compared to sleep (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17), but this euphemism applies only to believers. For those who trust in the Lord, the Bible describes death as sleep (i.e., a new level of spiritual consciousness), from which we will one day be physically raised.

***John 11:12, "Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well."***

***John 11:13, "Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep."***

***John 11:14, "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."***

***John 11:15, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."***

The disciples were confused, thinking that Jesus was speaking about natural sleep. So he said, Lazarus has died. But the most startling thing he said was that he was glad! However, Jesus was not glad concerning Lazarus’s death but glad concerning what he was about to do. Sometimes God will let things get worse before they get better. That’s often because he has something in mind that’s even better than what we requested. You see, the disciples misunderstood. They thought Jesus was speaking of Lazarus taking a nap. Isn't it strange that they were not amazed at Jesus knowing what Lazarus was doing, even though Jesus was miles away from him? They had seen so many miracles of Jesus that something as small as the miracle of Jesus knowing what Lazarus was doing miles away, had become commonplace to them. They should have been astonished that Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead. See how complacent even the disciples had become of the miracles, because they had seen so many. Jesus says, here, that He was glad that He had not been there to heal Lazarus before he died. Perhaps, when He raises Lazarus from the dead, they will be astonished and believe.

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

These disciples knew that to die would be their gain. That life is where the trial is. They should have, also, known that to wish to die before carrying out the mission God had for them to do was wrong. Die with him refers to with Jesus, not Lazarus. The Jews in Judea had tried to kill Jesus on His previous visits (7:1, 19, 25; 8:37, 40, 59; 10:31, 39). Didymus means “Twin.” Perhaps Thomas was a twin brother of Matthew since they appear together in lists of the apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). Thomas was one of the 12 disciples. Other than in John’s gospel, Thomas is mentioned only in the listings of the Twelve. On three of four occasions where John mentions Thomas, he also refers to him as Didymus. Thomas is an Aramaic name meaning “Twin” (Didymus in Greek). He seems to be inquisitive and impulsive. In John 11:16, thinking that Jesus is going to Bethany to die with Lazarus, he exhorts his fellow disciples to go and die with Jesus. When Jesus speaks of His return to heaven, Thomas confesses his ignorance of where Christ is going (14:5). Thomas thus reveals that he was spiritually ignorant and was lacking in faith, as were also the majority of the disciples during Christ’s earthly ministry. He was absent at Christ’s first appearance to the disciples and refused to believe without tangible evidence. Jesus’ later appearance removed Thomas’s doubts. Several apocryphal books that are associated with Thomas speak of a phenomenal ministry that he allegedly fulfilled in India, but they lack credibility. Later, Thomas would express doubt over Jesus’s resurrection (20:24-29). But for now, he was ready to die with [Jesus]. Those who are spiritually confident today may find themselves in the depths of despair and doubt tomorrow.

***John 11:17, "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already."***

***John 11:18, "Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:"***

***John 11:19, "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother."***

There is a time lapse between verse 16 and 17. When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. Though the funeral was over, many friends were present who had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them. On the fourth day, the body begins to deteriorate. This distance here is between one and one half and two miles. Remember, the Jews at Jerusalem had wanted to stone Jesus the last time He was in Jerusalem. They were well thought of in the community. Jew is used by John to denote those who did not accept Jesus. It denotes the Hebrews who were enemies of God. We know that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were from the upper class financially. If nothing else tells us that, the expensive perfume poured on Jesus by Mary cost nearly a year's wages for a healthy man. Jews from Jerusalem are present on this occasion. Some were enemies of Jesus. This explains why Martha called Mary “secretly” (v. 28). Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem.

***John 11:20, "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house."***

***John 11:21, "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."***

***John 11:22, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."***

***John 11:23, "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again."***

Martha met Jesus and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died. Translation: “This is all your fault, Jesus! I called you, but you didn’t come. If you had listened to me, none of this would have happened.” Yet this doesn’t mean she had lost all hope, because she adds, Even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Thus, Martha was filled with both faith and doubt. She is like the man who cried out to Jesus in desperation, “I do believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24). Martha knew of the great healing power of Jesus; and she knew if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. Martha, however, was not aware that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the grave. Perhaps, Mary was a little upset, because Jesus had not come immediately when they went for Him. Martha has that strong belief that can move a mountain. She knows in her heart that Jesus' power is unlimited. With a prayer on her lips and faith in her heart, she has come to Jesus for help. She knows the Father answers Jesus' prayers. Sometimes doubt comes when we least expect it. When it does, bring your doubts to God in prayer (he’s omniscient and knows about them anyway!). Believe that he can deal with your disappointment and spiritual struggle.” We see Jesus encouraging her, so that she might believe. This whole scene is for the glory of God. This is to let the whole world, then and now, know that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

**QUESTIONS**

1. In what town did Lazarus live?
2. Who were his two sisters?
3. Which of the sisters anointed Jesus with the perfume and wiped His feet with her hair?
4. When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, what did He say?
5. What was Lazarus sick for?
6. How many days extra did Jesus stay, after He heard Lazarus was sick?
7. What peril did the disciples remind the Lord of that was in Jerusalem?
8. Why does a man stumble when he walks at night?
9. In verse 11, what does Jesus mean when he says "...Lazarus sleepeth...”?
10. Did the disciples understand Jesus' meaning?
11. When did Jesus say outright that Lazarus was dead?
12. Why did Jesus say He was glad He was not there before Lazarus died?
13. What was Thomas' other name?
14. What was Thomas' suggestion that they all do?
15. How long had Lazarus been in the grave when Jesus arrived?
16. Which sister came out to meet Jesus?
17. How far is Jerusalem from Bethany?
18. Who is specifically mentioned who came to mourn with Mary and Martha?
19. What statement did Martha make that showed she had great faith in Jesus?
20. What encouraging statement did Jesus make to her?