

John 11:25 – “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’”

There are three prominent themes in this statement: **Life. Death. Belief.** Those are the three topics addressed in the story of Lazarus and the statement of Jesus Christ.

When a loved one dies, the questions of life and death are suddenly paramount. This is especially true when someone dies “young” or “too soon, before his time.” When you, or a loved one, is seriously sick, the question arises, “Why?”

John 11 relates the well-known story of the sickness, death, and then resurrection of Jesus’ good friend, Lazarus. Within this context, Jesus Christ provides proof that He is God (only God could bring a dead man back to life), direction on how to view illness and death, and the truth about physical and spiritual death.

As background and context, we consider two well-known (to the audience of Jesus) stories from the Old Testament.

**DAVID &
BATHSHEBA**

The Illness and Death of David & Bathsheba’s Son (2 Samuel 12:15–23)

2 Samuel 12:15–23 – “Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s widow bore to David, so that he was very sick. David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, ‘Behold, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do himself harm!’ But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, ‘Is the child dead?’ And they said, ‘He is dead.’ So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate. Then his servants said to him, ‘What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.’ He said, ‘While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, “Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live.” But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.’”

The Lord gives life. The Lord takes it away: His timing; His means; His determination of circumstances. It is so easy to believe that this happened to punish the parents. But do we know that? Could we ever know that? Isn’t that speculation?

JOB

Job Loses (Almost) Everything (Job 1 & 2)

Job 1:1 – “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

Job 1:8 – “The Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.’”

Job’s response to losing his wealth and family: **Job 1:20–22** – “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”

Job Loses His Health:

Job 2:5-6 – *“However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.” So the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.’”*

Two Responses to Tragedy, Death, and Sickness:

- **Job 2:9** – *“Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!’”* (No wonder Satan didn’t ask to test her?!)
- **Job 2:10** – *“But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*

These are interesting stories, of course. They are also instructive in understanding sickness, tragedy, and death. The principles here applied then and they apply today—God does not change.

1. God knows: We cannot know the purposes of God. Asking “Why, God?” is natural. But, thinking we know the answer to that question beyond His stated purposes is presumptuous.
2. God does: He gives life. He takes it away. He gives it back!
3. The believer’s response to God’s work is to bless His name. Worship. Trust.

God knows, and God does. The clear contrast is: We do not know, and we have zero ability to do what is His prerogative—sickness, health, life, and death. These two narratives are important to set the context for John 11. Jesus’ audience knew these stories and had been taught about the God of 2 Samuel 12 and Job 1 and 2. Now Jesus is before them, in the flesh, and says . . . I AM God you have learned about. That is me!

LAZARUS

Lazarus

John 11:1-4 – *“Now a certain man was sick: Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’ But when Jesus heard this, He said, ‘This sickness is not meant for death, but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’”*

Right away, in verse 4, Jesus provides the divine perspective on illness—even terminal illness.

- Sickness is from God—it is not random.
- It is purposeful—for the glory of God.
- It is effective—it actually does glorify God.

Lazarus died. **John 11:11** – *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep . . .”* Jesus was several miles away from Lazarus (v. 18) and yet He knew that Lazarus died.

Four days after Lazarus died, He arrives in Bethany (v. 17)

Martha’s Faith. **John 11:21-24** – *“Martha then said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise from the dead.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.’”*

Her statement acknowledges three timeless truths:

- Jesus has power to prevent death
- Jesus has the power to reverse death
- Jesus will reverse death in His time

JESUS

John 11:25-26 – *“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’”*

I Am the Resurrection

John 5:25–29 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; **those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**”

The saved and the unsaved will be resurrected. Those who are spiritually dead when they die will remain spiritually dead and will be resurrected to eternal separation and spiritual darkness.

I Am the Life

Jesus is the only one who can grant eternal life and provide eternal life. It is through Him—only Him.

- **John 3:15–16** – “. . . so that whoever believes will in Him have **eternal life**. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have **eternal life**.”
- **John 6:40, 47** – “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have **eternal life**, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has **eternal life**.”
- **John 10:27–28** – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give **eternal life** to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”
- **John 17:1–3** – “Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give **eternal life**. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’”

Why Did Jesus Weep?

This is an important question and one that is central to understanding all of this – and who Jesus Christ is.

John 11:33–37 – “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, ‘See how He loved him!’ But some of them said, ‘Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?’”

The Jews immediately interpret why Jesus is weeping. It might align with what you think might be the answer. They said Jesus wept because He loved Lazarus. This was certainly true (that He loved Lazarus) and that was, apparently a well-known fact. But is that why He wept?

Could His tears be an emotional response to His own sense of loss of His friend? Was He moved by the emotions and genuine grief of the friends and family of Lazarus? Or was it because of the disbelief of the people around Him?

Jesus has the power of death, the power to reverse death, and repeatedly promised that for those who believe in Him they will live even if they die. Mary, Martha, and others around Him, have all acknowledged their belief in those truths. And yet, they still grieved as if they didn’t. This is why Jesus wept. He felt grief for their unbelief and for the difficulty of life without complete and total confidence in Jesus Christ.

He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. All the way back in v. 11 He told His disciples that “I am going that I may awaken him from his sleep.” There was no sorrow and grief from the loss of His friend – He never lost Him! The response of the Jews in v. 36 (He loved Lazarus) displayed a total disbelief of the deity and power of Jesus Christ.

That one verse, “Jesus wept,” is very significant. The outward expression of emotion displays the humanity of Jesus Christ. That He wept was human. Why He wept is divine. The reason He wept was an expression of His omniscience – he knows the hearts of man. His deep love for His sheep was

overwhelming as He understood the spoken belief of His people did not match their deep heartfelt doubt.

The Rest of the Story

John 11:38–44 – *“So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, ‘Remove the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.’ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’”*

After waiting four days, nobody could challenge the miracle – Lazarus was truly dead and Jesus truly raised him from the dead. This account of the sickness, death, and resurrection of Lazarus is not included in the other Gospels. Why is this story included in John’s account of the life of Christ? “These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

RESPONSE

Two Responses

So far, John has recorded a response to all the I AM statements. This case is no different and there are, as always, two responses:

John 11:45–46 – *“Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.”*

Some believed. Some rejected. In this case, the rejecters became informers—and ignited the formation of a council of chief priests and Pharisees that began the formal and public movement towards the murder of Jesus Christ (John 11:47–57).

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Additional Resources:

1. Listen to a three-part sermon series by John MacArthur entitled, “I Am the Resurrection and the Life” (www.gty.org) preached September 14, 21, and 28, 2014, and available here:

- Part 1: [I Am the Resurrection and the Life, Part 1](#)
- Part 2: [I Am the Resurrection and the Life, Part 2](#)
- Part 3: [I Am the Resurrection and the Life, Part 3](#)

2. Read Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. List the attributes of God and the actions of God. How does this prayer help in difficult times especially when contemplating illness and death?

Questions for Discussion:

1. When dealing with sickness, tragedy, and death, what are the practical lessons from the story of the death of David’s son (2 Samuel 12: 15–23) and Job (Job 1–2)?
2. How does the death of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection, affect your worship? Consider Romans 6:3–7; Hebrews 2:9; and 2 Timothy 1:8–10.
3. What Scripture texts would you recommend to a brother who is struggling with the death or sickness of a loved one? Why?

Audio, video, and handouts for this session: www.gracechurch.org/motw

Next meeting: March 26, “The Principles of Bible Study, Part 2” (Brad Klassen)