

John 11:17 – 57

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~ The Lord Jesus intentionally waited for His friend Lazarus to die before returning to Bethany to raise him from the grave in the last leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. I'm sure very few people appreciate me stating it in such a manner; but God did it that way for His glory - and He makes no apologies for it. Jesus had just arrived at Bethany when we concluded our previous report. Lazarus had been dead four days by that time. Thomas made a statement about how they were going to die with Jesus if they went back to Bethany; and, remember, the people in Bethany have already tried to kill Jesus - but I don't think Thomas was really prepared to die....

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

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

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

~ Quite frankly, the average person is capable of making the trip from Jerusalem to Bethany on foot in a day. Martha reveals faith, but also impatience and a lack of reverence for the will of God. I think Mary concurred with Martha, but Mary was willing to wait patiently at home. Many of us rebuke Jesus today this same way when He doesn't operate according to our expectations and timelines. Some of us act hopeless and

despair in prayer at the first sign of trouble. The other problem is that most of us don't follow up as Martha does when she says....

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

~ They had all seen Jesus raise the dead, and this reveals just a glimmer of mistrust and questioning by Martha; I don't think much more should be said of this. She believed in the resurrection, but her unbelief was bigger than her belief. How many of us have that problem today? Well, Jesus said, "...though he were dead, yet shall he live." We're talking about spiritual death and spiritual life now, too. Immediately upon making that statement, Jesus looks to the future and says that we who have believed shall never die. Do YOU believe that? Martha did believe it; and she gave the same testimony in verse twenty-seven that Simon Peter gave in Matthew sixteen at verse sixteen....

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

28 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.

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31 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.

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.

~ Interestingly, the Lord Jesus will say soon, "it is expedient for you that I go away." See, if Jesus had continued in the flesh eternally, then He would not be omnipresent with us here and now. Only because Jesus is in Heaven can He send the Holy Spirit that indwells all believers all around the globe simultaneously. Jesus knows how we feel; and if you want to know how God feels about the death of your loved ones, then this verse is for you....

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

~ Death is naturally a frightful and troubling experience to any person. We can be sure that the Lord enters into sympathy with us during those difficult times. However, it's very important to note that the sympathy Jesus had was for the living – NOT for the dead. Quite frankly, I think Lazarus was better off in Paradise with Abraham! In fact, I know it is far better to go and be with the Lord Jesus in Heaven than to hang around the third rock from the sun. Death is only an unpleasant loss for us who remain behind down here because we are selfish. We do well to understand that....

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

John 11:17 - 57

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~ Well, the Jews missed the point completely because Jesus loved THEM. For Jesus to put Himself back in harms way and return to raise the dead in Bethany showed His deep love and care for ALL of them. Jesus loved the living that were there weeping. Of course, they're talking about the healing of the blind man again now. Everyone knew about this miracle and all of the other ones, too - they couldn't forget them or deny they had happened. They had made a profound impression on Jerusalem and the entire nation....

37 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?

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

39 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.

~ The undertakers have made death as pleasant as they can today; but the thought of a decaying body is not pretty. Death cannot be cosmetically covered up with a five-thousand-dollar suit and fabulous make-up. Flowers don't do anything to relieve the hurt. These things may soften the immediate shock, but that's their only function. Let's just keep it real and face up to the fact that death is the single-most unpleasant experience in this lifetime. Well, the dead, saved or lost, have moved out of that old dead body we see laying in the coffin. When we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord – and that means everyone. Some are to be raised to justification and eternal life; but others are going to be raised to eternal judgment and damnation. Again, we do well to remember Jesus said this would all be done for His glory....

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 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.

42 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.

~ Jesus didn't need to pray this prayer. You need to pray – and I need to pray it – but not Him. Jesus did this to teach us to pray – and how to pray. This is done for OUR benefit and to help OUR faith. There is a huge difference in the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, too, by the way. Lazarus is a restoration to life as life was previously. Lazarus died physically again at some later time. When Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended bodily back to Heaven. Jesus was resurrected in a glorified body....

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 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.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

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

~ So, even in Jesus day some believed, and some didn't. I can't imagine seeing the dead rise at Jesus command and not believing He was God; but that's the hardened state of the heart in some of these people. This is the last public appearance of the Lord Jesus before His death. The outreach ministry of Jesus is terminated here. From chapter thirteen through the end of this Gospel account, the time frame is His last week with the disciples. We can call these the last days, I suppose. The fact that we're nowhere

NEAR the end of this Gospel should shock and alarm us. Our safari gets strangely intriguing here, friends. The narrative I have to write from this chapter until the end to explain this the way that the Holy Spirit is telling me to explain it to you is not going to sit well at all with most people, I promise you; and, likely, not with ANY of you. This began with the Lord Jesus Christ being marked out by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

So, now that we have examined three and one-half Gospel records out of four, let's consider the following: There are 89 chapters in the four Gospels. 4 chapters document the first thirty years of the life of the Lord Jesus. There are 85 chapters accounting for the last three years and, of those, 27 chapters deal with the last eight days of His life. More than a full third of the Gospel record documents the death on the cross, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't take a mathematician to figure out where the emphasis is to be placed. Safari friends, you can just write this down: you do the Bible a disservice if the emphasis is not placed on the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, "I was determined not to know anything among you save the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Again, I would have almost bet that the raising of Lazarus would have convinced the most dubious of all men that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that's why I do not bet. This crowning miracle in His ministry should have turned the entire nation to Him as the Messiah - but it did not. Remember the words of Jesus now, "...if they hear not Moses and the prophets then neither will they be persuaded though One rose from the dead!" That's in the parable that has Lazarus in it.

Verse forty-six finds this group of rank unbelievers just around the hill from Jerusalem, and they cannot wait to go parrot some misinformation to the Pharisee's. I think this crowd enjoyed playing religion both ways, honestly. After the church leaves the earth and in the Great Tribulation period, and on into the millennium, there will be many great miracles performed; but that's not going to convince anyone, friends. See, if you can't trust God when the mob rule and majority turn away from Him, then you have no

John 11:17 - 57

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faith. The crowd here isn't running after Jesus, and they never have since. Even though Jesus died and was buried and rose again from the dead - they reject Him. We can believe it – don't tell me you can't – or that you must see a miracle. Your problem is not about believing in Christ; your problem is there is sin in your life that you refuse to give up. Who in the world do you think you are kidding? There is absolutely no problem with the evidence – the only problem is sin that leads to unbelief. We all might as well face this fact....

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

~ Pay close attention to the statements from the enemy because they are all revealing. The enemy says Jesus 'does many miracles.' People running around claiming healing and this and that better really, really, really make some careful spiritual notes here. Jesus doeth many miracles, friends – we all know that. No one is denying Jesus is performing miracles today because we all see them. Only a fourth-year seminary student could possibly deny this report. May I say, my conservative fundamental theological scholarly friends – you are just running for cover when you deny these Scriptural miracles....

48 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 biggest fear of the Pharisee's was that there would be a mass turning to the teachings of Jesus. That would have certainly meant a revolution. Rome would have cracked the whip on the religious rulers and ignored Jesus - and pandemonium would have ensued. The prevailing motivational basis for the religious rulers is fear. Fear keeps many away from Jesus today, but they cannot recognize their own desperate state. Sometimes, even in the tightest clique in a church, someone stands up and says what is right by the Word of God. When we don't see that happen anymore, we will know we are in big trouble. They won't know it, but they will be in big trouble. Many Christians just wag their tails like dumb dogs, my friends. They won't even bark to warn of danger....

John 11:17 - 57

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49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

~ I told you it will get strange, but you haven't seen anything yet. They are trying to rationalize that Jesus should die rather than the nation's religion dying out and Rome swallowing Israel up. Interestingly, that's exactly what happened anyways, and they were all put to death in 70 AD when Titus the Roman came through Jerusalem. As we move forward, we enter a remarkable prophecy. Caiaphas was given the gift of prophecy because he was high priest that year. We learned all about that back in Leviticus and Exodus....

52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

54 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.

55 And the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

56 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?

57 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.

~ So, our safari reaches the beginning of the end of the earthly habitation of the Lord Jesus. This is the absolute breaking point between Him and the religious rulers of Israel. They just will not believe, though one be raised from the dead. They saw Lazarus walk out of the tomb. They saw the blind man made to see. They had witnessed the teaching and the feedings firsthand. So, our next report begins our final days with the Lord Jesus, and the Passover is nigh at hand. We will also have our fourth supper in Bethany, as we had previously in Matthew, Mark and Luke. I hope you can continue with us in our Spiritual Safari ~

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