

# Gospel of John - episode 21

## Chapter 11

Welcome to our Sharing on St. John's Gospel. We now come into Chapter 11, almost at the end of Jesus's ministry. This brings us to the peak of Jesus's ministry. In this chapter, we get the final, seventh sign, which is the most important one. It is the greatest sign, the one which will point most directly to Jesus's own Resurrection and his victory, and will also introduce us to the second half of the Gospel. Nowhere else in the Gospel does John give us so many titles for Jesus in the same chapter, apart from Chapter 1, of course, which introduced the whole Gospel. For example, in 11:4, he tells us that Jesus is the Son of God; in 11:8, that Jesus is the Rabbi or teacher; in 11:12, that Jesus is the Lord; in 11:25, that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. In 11:27, that Jesus is the Christ. In 11:29, that he is the Master, and in 11:42, that Jesus is the Beloved Son in communion with the Father. Finally, in 11:50, Jesus is the man who must die for the people. That's quite a lot all in one incident.

You realise, of course that as he relates the story of the raising of Lazarus, there are different levels. You are used to that by now. At the very beginning, we see him simply as a man who loves his friends and as a man who can cry at a funeral of one of his friends. The name Lazarus means 'God is my help', and this man will experience God as his help in a way that is out of all proportion to the rest of us. Lazarus and his family were very wealthy. They belonged to the upper class - what we call high society. Lazarus owned about two-thirds of Bethany. In the second half of the Gospel, we will discover the reason why Jesus could use Gethsemane and why he could use what we now call the Cenacle or the place of the Last Supper, is that Lazarus owned those properties and made them available to Jesus.

So, to use language that people in areas of conflict understand, Lazarus provided a safe house for Jesus and his disciples during the whole of His public Ministry. Because Lazarus and his family were protected by Rome, the Sanhedrin kept a respectful distance, so Jesus was really safe. He made many visits to this place; he would stay on Lazarus's property when he went to Jerusalem. That's why the Sanhedrin could only get him in the end, and because Judas betrayed him. The other thing I want to say about Lazarus is he is never referred to as a disciple. Lazarus was a personal friend of Jesus, and that's a completely different relationship. It says everything about Lazarus. Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are. But it also says something wonderful about Jesus, that of all his followers and all the people who admired or hated him, he had one real friend. That one real friend was committed to Jesus in a very special way. Jesus gives us his greatest sign, the sign of the Resurrection, on this special friend.

When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he will know what 'God is our friend' means for the human race. You must remember what was in the previous chapters because John builds on each one. So, in chapter 10, Jesus told us that he was the Good Shepherd and that none of his sheep would be lost, that nobody could take one of his sheep out of his hands. He calls them out of wherever they are and into his own sheepfold. He leads them from spiritual death to spiritual life. So, we are used to that, but now his closest friend - his one and only friend - has been snatched by death, which the realm of below considers the ultimate darkness, the ultimate destruction. It seems that he couldn't save his friend. This will be the

charge that the people on the level of below will level at Jesus. You couldn't save your friend. But Jesus is going to call Lazarus from death to life, and in doing that, John will show us what will happen to all of us at the end of time - that the whole universe will wait for the Son of God to call each of us from death to eternal life, because there will be a resurrection of the dead.

Daniel 12:2 said that in the end, some would rise to everlasting life, and others to everlasting shame. So, there will be a day when Jesus, the Son of God, will call all of us from death to life. The people on the level of below consider death the final punishment. That's why the Sanhedrin will give Jesus the final punishment. Knock him off the face of the Earth, get rid of him. He gets lost in the valley of death, and that's it. So, death was considered the ultimate punishment - 'the death penalty'. If you went into death with unrepented sin, then the sting of death was the unrepented sin, because not only would you go into darkness, but you would go into eternal darkness. 'Some will rise to eternal shame'. The one who was the ruler of the region of darkness is, of course, the Prince of Darkness. Jesus is going to face into death, not only in Lazarus' case, but in his own also. He will teach us on the death of Lazarus what he will do in facing death himself. He will take the sting out of death because he will pay for all sin and make forgiveness and salvation available for everybody.

This is what Saint Paul says years later in 1 Cor 15:54-57. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting? Now, the sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the law, but thanks be to God, we have the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". So, we look at the sting of death first; we look at the terror of death, and then we look at what Jesus is going to do. It's really wonderful. Jesus demonstrates now the victory he will win on Calvary when he is lifted up on the cross before being lifted up into glory. He has to show it ahead of time in case they wouldn't understand. In chapter 10, we were told that nobody could snatch one of the sheep out of the Good Shepherd's care, but death snatches us all. By the time you come to chapter 11, there have been two attempts to arrest Jesus, and they have tried at least twice to stone him. So, Jesus seems to be quite good at escaping death.

But is escaping death the issue? No. Jesus will show that not escaping death, but going into it and healing it and releasing us from the power of death - is the great thing. We, the readers know that it's only a short time before the Sanhedrin will get Jesus and give him the punishment of death. At the same time, they don't know that that is his moment of victory. John gives us the triumphant answer in chapter 11, showing us that the Shepherd will liberate the sheep from the jaws of death when he raises Lazarus. Secondly, he will go on in the second half of the Gospel to conquer death himself, so that death will never again be a terror for anybody who believes in God. We will hear Jesus use a term for death, which was very unusual at the time. In fact, it wasn't used at all, but we use it. And that is **sleep**, a time of rest. So that a person sleeps in death, but sleep means you will be called again. That is the origin of our English word, 'cemetery', a place where the souls rest until they are called by the Son of God.

If you come to the level of below, death was just simply the final dumping place for anybody that they didn't like. The death penalty was given to anybody you hated or you wanted to get rid of, but they don't know what Jesus is doing. They have not accepted what Jesus has said about himself, and therefore,

they are not ready for what he will show them in chapter 11. Now, when we did chapter 9, I showed you that there were two separate movements - a man was coming from darkness to light, but the leaders were going from light into darkness. There are two movements in chapter 11 also; there will be death followed by life for Lazarus, and there is life followed by death for Jesus! In other words, to pay for Lazarus's resurrection, Jesus has to die. To pay for our Redemption Jesus had to die. The price of our Redemption is very high.

We begin with the last few verses of chapter 10; 40-42: "Jesus went back again to the far side of the Jordan to stay in the district where John had been baptising". That is quite a distance now from Jerusalem because you travel east across the country, then cross the Jordan into what today we call the Kingdom of Jordan. Many people came to him there, and they said, "John gave no signs, but all that this man has said is true". We have two movements among the people also, those who come to Jesus and believe, and those who reject and persecute him. This is the way that John brings us into this very dramatic chapter 11. He says that "there was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany, and he had two sisters called Martha and Mary, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man, Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair". Now, that's the story of the sinful woman you find in the Synoptic Gospels, but the scholars don't accept that this woman who anointed the feet of Jesus is in fact Mary of Magdala. They have actually created a new 'literary woman' called Mary of Bethany!

But John tells us quite clearly that this woman here, Mary, the sister of the sick man, Lazarus, was the one who anointed Jesus with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, and she's going to do that again in chapter 12. I don't know why they have to make another woman to do that. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, "Lord, the man you love is ill". I want to stop there. If Jesus - the Saviour of the whole world - got a message saying that 'the man you love is ill', how would he read it? Would he read it simply that there's one individual back in Bethany who needs him? The 'man' is the whole of humanity, and it is sick unto death. You know this if you've read and listened to the rest of the Gospel. The whole of humanity is sick unto death. The sickness is not physical. It may be expressed in the physical body, but the sickness is in the soul, because the sickness of the soul is the incurable disease of the human race, and it is sin. Lazarus becomes a symbol of humanity.

You have got used to this, haven't you? Nicodemus represented the Judean leadership; the woman of Samaria represented all the Samaritans; the blind man in chapter 9 represented the whole human race also. Here, Lazarus represents humanity. Jesus, the Lord, hears that the whole human race is in danger of death. The only way that he can save them from the ultimate death - which is not physical death - it's the death of the soul in Hell - and to do that, he has got to go into death himself. He must take Satan on in single combat to conquer death and hell. That is what he wants to do, and that's what he decides to do. When Martha and Mary send him the message, it is just a personal message; they are sending it from the one household - one that gave Jesus a 'home from home'. When Jesus left Nazareth, the only other 'home from home' he had was this house in Bethany. They call him to come; what they want is that Jesus will **save their brother from death**. You will hear exactly the same thing when Jesus is on the cross. 'Come down from the cross, save yourself from death'.

But saving anybody from death is not the solution, because the only way you can go to Heaven is to leave the Earth, and the only way you can leave the Earth is by death, so, putting off death endlessly is putting off Heaven. It's not the solution. If Jesus came down from the cross then, it meant there would be no Redemption - and that's no solution. So, saving people from death is not it. It's **saving people through death** is the issue, that the person going through the portal of death goes straight to Heaven. That is the issue. Running through this chapter, there is a call theme, which I'm not going to give time to, I'll just mention it. Martha and Mary call the Saviour. When he decides to go to Bethany, Thomas calls the others and says, "Let us go and die with him". Then Martha and Mary are called to believe in the Resurrection, and Jesus calls all humanity to come with him from death to life.

In chapter 11, Jesus demonstrates something he taught us in chapter 5:28-29: "The hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of the voice of the Son of God". That is going to be the prophetic foreshadowing of the final day of the resurrection of the body. When Jesus hears that his friend, Lazarus, is ill, he does something very strange if you are reading it on the level of below. The sisters sent him this message, and Jesus said, on receiving the message, "this sickness will not end in death. It will end in God's glory, and through it, the Son of God will be glorified". So, he is announcing that something extraordinary is about to happen. If you remember at the beginning of Chapter 9, when Jesus was asked about the man who was born blind, was he guilty or were his parents guilty? Jesus said, "This man was born blind so that the works of God could be demonstrated in him".

So, this event is going to give Jesus an opportunity to really show who he is. Jesus gives the same response to Lazarus, that the sickness will not end in death. Now, he doesn't say that Lazarus won't die. It's just that in the end, it will not be death. Nobody can hear that. Many people who are reading the text can't hear it either - that Jesus doesn't say he won't die. The two sisters are appealing to the heart of Jesus to come and save their brother. They represent the whole of humanity appealing to the heart of the Saviour to save us now. When Jesus enters into Jerusalem in chapter 12, you're going to hear the people say that to him, Hosannah, which means, 'save us now' - that's the very reason why he came. The sickness will not end in death because Jesus is going to do an incredible thing. This means that the miracle Jesus intends doing is not a healing; it's a resurrection. The miracle will glorify Jesus, that is, manifest his divinity. But the miracle will also bring about his own death because the reaction to the raising of Lazarus is that the Sanhedrin decide to get rid of Jesus immediately.

Nevertheless, his own death will ultimately glorify him in a way that this death only prepares for - this death will herald or point to his hour. What John wants you to see is that we are looking at mystery, not tragedy. This is very important. Then John remarks that "Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and yet he deliberately delayed two days". There's a number of things here. Jesus loves each one of us, infinitely, absolutely. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (Jn 15:9). I have already reminded you several times, that in Jeremiah 31:3, God said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I am constant in my affection for you". There's no question, but God loves us infinitely, so why did Jesus delay? If we are thinking on the level of below, we'll say, 'well, if he loves him, he ought to go and help him' - that

means save him from death. But you've seen already in Chapter 11 and in almost every chapter that we've had that Jesus will only do the Will of the Father. He will not do anything else.

Therefore, he waits for God's kairos time to intervene for Lazarus. Now, I've told you before about cronos and kairos – two Greek words. From cronos, you get the English word chronology, so you must have morning before evening and Tuesday before Wednesday. God's kairos time is a completely different thing. It only operates on the level of above, whereas cronos or chronology operates on the level of below. Jesus waits for God's kairos time - God's special time for intervention, and that time is the time for the raising of Lazarus, not the healing of Lazarus. Jesus doesn't need to demonstrate to anybody that he can heal people. He's already done that abundantly. It wouldn't add in any way to his ministry, nor to the manifestation of his glory, but the raising of Lazarus will; this is something completely unique. What Jesus is going to do here will never have been done before or since on planet Earth. So, we have to remind ourselves of something I've said to you before, which Isaiah told us in Chapter 55:8-10, that God's ways and our ways are as different from the Heavens to the Earth, and the way God thinks is completely different to us.

So, if we're on the level of below expecting Jesus to just give a human response to Lazarus, then we don't get it. But I told you that not only should you look back, you should look forward. So, when you go into Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, you get an answer as to why Jesus delayed. He tells us that God always wants to do more for us than we would ever ask or imagine. Jesus is going to do something here that nobody could ever have imagined. Nobody, literally, nobody could believe it. So, what did he do? He waited until the third day. Now, you've noticed this emphasis in the Gospel since Chapter 2. The third day is very significant because each third day is actually pointing to the Resurrection of Jesus, which will happen on the third day. So here we have his ministry coming to a peak moment, which will be manifested on the third day. Jesus only decided to travel to Judea on the third day. Of course, we have the disciples operating on the level of below, and they are afraid to go to Judea because the leadership is very hostile to Jesus, and they might kill him.

The disciples don't know that when Jesus goes to Bethany - Bethany is only two miles from Jerusalem -that He will never come back. Jesus is, in fact, going to Jerusalem to die! If the disciples had realised this, I think there would have been trouble in the camp. They don't realise it. He's going to die. So unknown to them, you've got this incredible drama. I'll take this up next. Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.

## **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our Sharing on St. John's Gospel. We continue with Chapter 11. We left you the last time with saying that Jesus was delaying two days before he would go back to Judea. The disciples said, "Rabbi, it's not long since the Jews - meaning the Jewish leaders - wanted to stone you, why are you going back again? Jesus replied, "are there not twelve hours in the day? A man can walk in the daytime without

stumbling because he has the light of the world to see. But if he walks at night, he stumbles because there's no light to guide him”.

Well, this This is the same reaction that Jesus gave to the Apostles and the people in Chapter 9:4, that as long as it has not come to his hour, he is completely safe. Nothing can happen to him. But when his hour comes, none of them could save him from the destiny chosen from all eternity, because he has to give his life for us. So, he tells them that they have to walk in his light and in his steps, not only now, but forever. And when the night comes - and it's going to come - they will fail, and he knows they will fail. He knows that one of them is a devil, as he has already told us in chapter 6, and that Judas will betray him when the night comes. But everything is safe now while it is still daytime. Now, if they knew that Jesus has only one week to live, it would have been absolutely astonishing for them. They wouldn't have been able to take it at all. The extraordinary thing is that from chapter 12 to Chapter 19 of John's Gospel, it's all in one week! It's absolutely amazing. Because John gives you so much teaching to try and explain the importance of what's going on, we seem to think that it goes on for a long time, and it doesn't.

So, Jesus announces what he's going to do. Jesus said to them, “Our friend Lazarus is resting. I am going to wake him”. He announces Lazarus's resurrection. But of course, they're looking at the level of below, and they say, “but if he's able to rest, he's going to get better”. But the phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus. They thought that by rest, he meant sleep. Jesus gives a new word for death, you see, 'rest and sleep'. Jesus put it plainly. He said, “Lazarus is dead, and for your sake, I am glad I was not there, because now you will believe. Let us go to him”. So here we have the announcement of the raising of Lazarus. I want to remind you of a text in in Hosea 6:1-2, “Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us. After a day or two, he will bring us back to life. And on the third day, he will raise us, and we will live in his presence”.

This is exactly what Jesus is going to do for Lazarus. He has delayed two days. Lazarus has suffered during that time, and has died, but the Lord will bring him back to life, and he will live, not only physically, but spiritually in God's presence. Lazarus became a great leader of the early church. He became a bishop in the south of France, in the area of Provence, where there is a church built for Saint Lazarus. So, it's important that when we say that Jesus raised him to life, he really did raise him to a full life. Jesus is the Word of God, and he fulfils the words of scripture, as we see all the way along. When Jesus changed the term death into rest or sleep, I want to give you some references from the synoptic Gospels where this was given clearly, so that you can look it up for yourselves. See Matt 9:24; Acts 7:60; 1 Thess 4:13 and 1 Cor 15:6, all of which are telling us that death is sleep until the Lord calls us. Since the Apostles are not aware of the earth-shaking event that Jesus has just announced for them, they are quite reluctant to go.

They say, 'look, If he's asleep, he's okay', so, Jesus has to tell them plainly that Lazarus is dead. Now, for the people on the level of below to announce that Lazarus is dead means, 'what's the point in going?' We thought you might heal him. We thought you might prevent his death. But now that death has happened, hope is gone. That's very interesting. This is what Jesus wants to give us - that going into death, we have the hope of eternal life - that we're going into the ultimate fulfilment, in fact. So, Jesus tells them that it is in the raising of Lazarus that they, his Apostles, will realise that he is divine. The strange thing is that the

death of Jesus is going to follow soon after the death of Lazarus. When they realise he is divine in raising Lazarus, this is going to cause them scandal in the Garden of Gethsemane, because if he is divine, he should not surrender into the hands of his enemies! It's when Jesus surrenders into the hands of his enemies, that they will be scandalised.

So here you've got this great sign leading to a great scandal in which they will all run away. For the first time in this Gospel, but not the last, Thomas speaks up. Thomas was known as the Twin. We don't know anything about his twin. He said to the other disciples, "Let us go to and die with him". Thomas, Judas, and John were the three youngest of the twelve Apostles. We know that John was only a teenager when he got to know Jesus. We don't know just how young Thomas and Judas were, probably just in their 20s. Some of the other men were much older than Jesus. Here is Thomas saying, 'Come on, let us go and we'll die with him'. In other words, we will lay down our lives for the Master. He doesn't realise this is not the time to lay down your life for the master. That will come much later, when all of the Apostles, except John, will in fact lay down their lives in martyrdom for Jesus. Now is the time when Jesus must lay down his life for them. If he doesn't do that, they would never, ever lay down their lives for him!

This isn't the only time that Thomas speaks up. The Gospel will close with the words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God". So, Thomas, one of the younger ones, really steps up to the plate at this particular point. "On arriving Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. Jesus delayed two days, and it took them two days because they were walking to get to Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem. "Many Jews - that is the Jewish leaders - came to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, If you had been here, my brother would not have died". Very interesting. So, since Lazarus is four days in the tomb, and Israel is a hot country - disintegration of dead bodies is very fast - then there's no way anybody can accuse Jesus that this is going to be a resuscitation. In some of the raisings that Jesus did - when he raised a person on the day that they died - they could say to him it was merely a resuscitation.

But if a person has been rotting in a tomb for four days, then you're not dealing with resuscitation, you're dealing with resurrection. So, this is the ultimate sign that Jesus gives to his enemies. Because Lazarus's family were from high society, the Jewish leaders - not the entire Sanhedrin, of course - but some of the Jewish leaders would come to the funeral. So, when Martha comes to Jesus, we have a dialogue that puts you with a question mark. She almost believes in a resurrection, and then she pulls back. So, what you have here is that John has superimposed the faith of the Church at the end of the first century onto this text, as he has done with other texts as well, because after all, he is writing at the end of the first century, and Christians are no longer in the place that they were before the death of Jesus, when they didn't understand anything. They do understand things now because the Holy Spirit is upon them, and the Holy Spirit is teaching and guiding them. So, John doesn't want to leave you in the position of Martha's struggle.

There seems to be a contradiction in Martha's dialogue with Jesus. She begins with saying to Jesus, "If you had been here" - that's the past tense - "my brother would not have died". That's the position of all

who are living at the level of below where saving somebody from death is the ultimate. But then she seems to look at Jesus and her faith sores. She said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you. So, she almost reaches the level of believing that Jesus could do a resurrection. I say almost because when Jesus goes to get practical about it and removing the stone, she says, Oh, he's four days! He'll smell. So, she's almost there, but not quite. "Your brother, Jesus said to her, will rise again, and Martha said - now she shoots into the future - she represents all of us in our struggles of faith. It's easy to believe in things that have happened in the past. It's also easy to believe that on the last day - which is so far into the future - in the resurrection of the dead.

But what about believing that the Lord is actually present to you now? The shock that Martha receives is that the Resurrection and the Life are present to her at this moment, in this incident. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though he dies, he will live". He said to Martha, 'your brother is in the tomb, but if you can believe, he can come out'. So, you can see that she had almost reached the point of believing in the resurrection, but actually not quite. "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die". That means that when your soul leaves your body, you will live forever. Do you believe this? Martha is challenged, like everybody else, to look at the fact that the person in front of her is not just their great friend. He is not just the Jewish Messiah; he is not just a healer. The person in front of her is the Lord, the one who created the Heavens and the Earth, the sea and the sky, and all that is in them.

Jesus is the one that, if you go back to the Book of Genesis, all he had to do was send out his creative word, and whatever he spoke came into being. If you can understand that the One speaking to you **is that Person**, then you will understand that he will speak into a tomb of rotten death, and death will give up its victim. But must understand that Jesus is the creative, spirit-filled, life-giving Word of God, that has been with God for all eternity. He was with God; He was God. He has been on the bosom of the Father for all eternity: John 1:18. So, here Martha stands in front of a person with this challenge! 11: 27: she says, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world". Now, whether Martha was capable of that before the Resurrection or not, we don't know. Because, as I say, John has superimposed the understanding of the Church at the end of the first century onto this text, and this is certainly the statement of John's Church. Yes, we believe that you are the Christ - that is the Messiah. You are the Son of God. You are the one who is coming going into this world.

Well, if he is that, then there's no problem about a resurrection. It is at that point that Martha goes looking for her sister. We've been told that her sister had stayed back in the house. Her sister is the one that the Synoptics tell us was the contemplative Mary versus the active Martha. The active of Martha goes looking for the contemplative Mary to tell her that the Lord is here. But over and above that, John is saying to us that at the end of the first century, anyone who has truly discovered that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into this world; that Jesus is truly the Lord, then we have an obligation to go looking for others to bring them to him. We must go. In other words, we must have this missionary thrust in our lives. We are told from verse 28, "When she had said this, she went and she called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'the Master is here'".



Now you see where we go back into the time before the hour of Jesus and forward into the time of the church - because going back, she simply says, "The master is here, and he wants to see you. Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and she went to him. Jesus, in fact, had not come into the village". This is something I want to point out to you. This was the 'home from home' that Jesus had throughout his three and a half years of public Ministry. Whenever he came to Jerusalem, this was where he stayed. He stayed with his friends. They were very close to him. And yet you are told quite clearly that Jesus has not come to the house! He knows he's not welcome. He has stayed out in the village. Martha went out into the village to meet him, but she did not bring him back to the house. It's very interesting. When she calls Mary, Mary goes out into the village to meet him also, and neither of them invite him back. Jesus has to come back on his own decision. So, you can feel the disappointment of the two women. They feel that Jesus has let them down.

Both of them say to him, 'If you had been here, our brother would not have died'. They are completely disappointed in him. It is completely out of character that they wouldn't automatically invite him to their house. Some people don't see the human side of the story. You can only imagine how Jesus felt when this family that was so close to him are now treating him as somebody who has caused them grievous pain. That would touch him very deeply, and you'll see this right now. "Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village. He was still at place where Martha had met him. When the Jews – that is the Jewish leaders - who came to the house sympathising with Mary, saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the sepulchre". This is very interesting because they follow Mary. Jesus asks Mary, "where have you laid him?" Because they follow Mary, they will be present for the raising of Lazarus. It's very interesting.

Mary went to Jesus, this is verse 32, and "as soon as she saw him, she threw herself at his feet". Now, that's the Mary of Magdala that we know! She always throws herself at the feet of Jesus, and she will do it again on the morning of the Resurrection. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died". This must have cut Jesus to the quick. "At the sight of her tears and of those of the Jews that followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with the sigh that came from his heart, Where have you laid him?" It is only at this point that Jesus shows his feelings for Lazarus and his feeling for the loss of his friend. This is terribly important. The people who are at the funeral are going to say "if he loved the man, why wouldn't he come and just save him?" So, you have this mixed reaction to Jesus all the time. On the one hand, they say, 'Yes, see how he loved him because he cries at this funeral. On the other hand, they say, 'why couldn't he have prevented it?'

What John is letting you see is that everybody in the entire country knew that Jesus was a great prophet. They knew he was a great healer, that he had signs that nobody else had. So, they don't understand, therefore, why he didn't do something for his friend. They all think that Jesus has let his friend down. Now, why does Jesus cry? This is one of the questions that really needs to be asked, because we know that Jesus delayed two days to come on the third day for the raising of Lazarus. So, if he is coming for the raising of Lazarus, why does he cry? That's a very important question. First of all, Jesus is completely human as well as divine. He has two natures. He genuinely feels for the two ladies who are upset. He feels deeply the fact that they are telling him that he has let them down. He probably feels a bit

disappointed that they don't believe in him at the level that he wants - that he really is the Lord. We know that none of them really got it, that he really was the Lord before his own Resurrection.

No matter how hard Martha would try, she doesn't make it to this level. But there's a much deeper reason why Jesus would cry. When Jesus looks at his friend in the tomb, he is seeing the final stage of the disintegration of the human race after the fall. Once the human race fell, sickness, sin, death, and hell followed. Sickness for everybody, for everybody sins. Death is the punishment for everybody, and Hell for those who go into death with the sting of unrepented sin. So, he's sees that tragedy and also the fact that his own dear friend had to experience this as well. But there's something deeper still. When Jesus looks at the tomb of Lazarus, he's also looking straight at the fact that in a few days, just a week, he himself will be in a tomb. He himself will have to go into this darkness. He himself will have to go through this experience. He himself will have to face this ultimate test. And he is very young, only in his early 30s. He's at a point where men feel that they are really beginning to live, that they are reaching the peak of their lives. They are at their absolute best, and he has to face the disintegration of death. And so, it's a very important point.

Now we find the shortest sentence in the New Testament: "Jesus wept". What we all have to say to each other is, I hope he doesn't have to weep over me! Because once he has wept at this particular point, he was going on to save us all out of death. I think Jesus weeps when a person goes into death, still with the sting of death on them, even though he has paid for their Redemption. I also think that when they go before him for judgement when they have refused all grace that he has given to them. I don't think our judge will be angry. I think he will weep again, that this soul has not accepted what he has done for them. The weeping of the Saviour here is very important. The Jewish people who were present said, "see how much he loved him. But there were some who said, He opened the eyes of the blind man. Couldn't he not have prevented this man's death?" This level of thinking, as I said, is still going to be there when Jesus himself is on the cross.

So, "sighing deeply". Why would Jesus sigh deeply? He is so tired of this low level of thinking! He is so tired of this unbelief. He has tried so hard to get through to them. I'm going to leave you with Jesus sighing, and in our next episode, I will show you this great sign that Jesus gave.

Thank you for listening. Goodbye. God bless you.