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## **John 11**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## John 11.

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### Topics.

- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.
- Jesus returns to Judea to heal Lazarus.
- Jesus tells the disciples; Lazarus has fallen asleep.
- Jesus power came from God.
- I am the resurrection and the life.
- Jesus wept.
- Lazarus walks out of the tomb.
- The spiritual message within this miracle.
- It is better that one man die for the people, not the whole nation.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter Jesus told the Jews that he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, the Jews accuse him of having a demon and stone him for saying he is one with the Father. Jesus leaves Judea and goes to the Jordan and many believe on him.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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**THIS ENTIRE CHAPTER IS ABOUT LAZARUS**

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### JOHN 11:1-6

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#### Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead.

- **John 11:1-6:** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

**Bethany:** is a village two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Jesus has just left Jerusalem because the Jews were plotting to kill him and about to stone him so he is aware of the danger there is for him in Judea, but because he loves Mary, Martha and Lazarus he remains in Judea for another two days before he goes to Bethany (only two miles from Jerusalem) most likely hoping the Jews fury might have dissipated by then and their spies stopped seeking for him. He had probably intended to go in the other direction. Jesus did not need to rush to Lazarus since he already knew he was going to raise him from the dead we know this because Jesus said, "This illness does not lead to death because it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (v3).

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### JOHN 11:7-10

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## Jesus returns to Judea to heal Lazarus.

- **John 11:7-10:** Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

In the previous chapter the Jews gathered stones with the intent of stoning Jesus that's why he left Judea, but he tells his disciples if they go back to Judea in the twelve hours of daytime they will be safe because the light of the sun allows them to see anything that appears dangerous and those seeking to kill him would only do it in secret not amongst the streets that are crowded in the daytime then he contrasts this wisdom to the foolishness of those who travel during the twelve hours of darkness saying they will stumble because they cannot see. It is interesting to notice Jesus words, "They do not stumble, because they see the light of this world" (v9) because they imply that whoever walks with Christ will not stumble because, "He is the light of the world." But those who do walk in darkness will stumble because there is no light (wisdom and understanding) in them.

**NOTE:** this is a principal Jesus used many times when he was in Jerusalem especially as it got closer to the time for him to lay down his life. He and the disciples would minister in the city during the day and retreat to the hills during the night it kept them safe from the Pharisees who were seeking to kill him up until Judas betrayed him.

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## JOHN 11:11-22

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### Jesus tells the Disciples Lazarus has Fallen Asleep.

- **John 11:11-22:** After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." <sup>13</sup>Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup>and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." <sup>17</sup>Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. <sup>20</sup>So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Even though the disciples new it was dangerous for Jesus to return to Bethany because it was so close to Jerusalem, Thomas encouraged the other disciples to go with him knowing that they also could be killed (v16). Many Jews were comforting Martha and Mary.

**NOTICE:** Martha' great faith, she had no-doubt Jesus could have healed her brother and even after he has been dead four days, she has total faith that God will give him whatever he asks.

**Jesus power came from God:** Martha's words, "I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" Clearly shows that Jesus power came from God, it was Gods Spirit flowing through Jesus that gave him the power he had.

**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep:** Jesus knowing Lazarus was dead told the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep." This is because all who die in Christ will be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory so death for them is just like a long sleep, it is temporary until they are woken at the sound of the Archangels trumpet and get out of their beds,

(i.e. the grave) at which time the dead in Christ will be raised imperishable, and their perishable body will put on the imperishable and their mortal body will put on immortality and they will rise and those who are alive, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so they will always be with the Lord.

(Matt. 24:30-31) (1 Cor. 15:51-55) (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

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## JOHN 11:23-38

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### I am the Resurrection and the Life.

- **John 11:23-38:** Jesus said to her (Martha) "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die (eternally). Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." <sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. <sup>34</sup>And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" <sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

The words, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (v25) appear to contradict each other, but it means that whoever believes in Jesus will never die eternally and those who are raised to eternal life will never again die. Martha had tremendous insight and great faith she believed Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God who had been promised by Moses and the prophets to come into the world and even before Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead she believed in the resurrection and that her brother would be raised in it. Here is the heart of the Christian faith: Jesus said:

- "I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in Me will live" (eternally) (John 11:25).

This shows that salvation to eternal life does not come by keeping ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions but by faith in Christ.

**Jesus wept:** Jesus upon seeing the tears of grief in Mary and her Jewish friends was deeply moved and greatly concerned so much so he was brought to tears (v35) (this is the shortest verse in the Bible). It is unlikely Jesus was moved to sorrow because Lazarus had died since he knew he was going to raise him from the dead (v4), his weeping most likely was for the heartache he saw in Mary and her friends or because of the people's unbelief and the fact they still did not know who he was. Remember people knew he had healed the blind man and were saying, "Surely he could have healed Lazarus" (v37).

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## JOHN 11:39-45

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## Jesus tells Martha to take away the Stone.

- **John 11:39-45:** Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead four days."<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her (Martha), "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me."<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."<sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."<sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

Jesus is with Mary and Martha who he deeply loves and who are in overwhelming grief and sorrow because they have lost their brother. Imagine Jesus enormous excitement, he knows Lazarus is going to walk out of the tomb, but Mary, Martha and her friends have no-idea he has the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. In fact, they warn him of the terrible smell there would be since Lazarus had been dead four days.

**Lazarus walks out of the tomb:** Jesus words, "Martha did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God," refers to (v4). The stone is removed the stone and Jesus prays to the Father and then says, "Lazarus, come out" and Lazarus miraculously came out. The fact Jesus prayed and thanked his Father for the miracle clearly shows that Jesus was dependent on God for his miraculous power and shows that God's Spirit was flowing through Christ every time he performed a miracle, we know this because Jesus said to his Father, "I know that you always hear me," Meaning he knows God would always answer his prayer.

**NOTE:** Jesus did not need to always pray before a miracle because God was always with him and would always do whatever he wanted, but he prayed the prayer not for himself but for the benefit of those watching so that they would believe that God sent him (John 11:42).

**Jesus tells the people to unbind Lazarus:** Lazarus with his hands, feet and face bound with linen walks out of the tomb and Jesus said to Mary, Martha and their Jewish friends, "Unbind him, and let him go." And many of the Jews believed in Jesus. The Spiritual message within this miracle is that Jesus word has the power to set free those who are spiritually dead and bound by the bondage of the law (symbolised by the linen strips). In this context linen is a perfect symbol of the law since linen normally symbolises righteousness and the Law is perfect. The law puts people in bondage not because there is a fault in the Law but because there is a fault in us (i.e. self, ego, pride, greed etc.). Jesus said, "This miracle is for the glory of God" (v4), the glory of God in this context was the resurrection of Lazarus.

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## JOHN 11:46-48

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### The Chief Priests and Pharisees feared the Romans.

- **John 11:46-48:** but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.<sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs."<sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

Some of the Jews that had witnessed Lazarus walking out of the tomb tell the chief priests and Pharisees the amazing miracle Jesus had done. The religious authorities should have recognised that Jesus was Israel's promised Messiah and the Christ, but they were more concerned about their position of authority and power than they were in humbling themselves and submitting to Christ. This is stunning for the following two reasons:

1. The religious authorities knew Jesus had performed many miraculous signs that no man without God could do, yet rather than believe he is the Christ they are worried the Romans will take their power and their nation away which shows how far removed from God they were since the Old Testament scrolls which they read every day clearly teach that Israel's Messiah and Christ would perform all the miracles Jesus did and that he would be King of all nations.
2. It is stunning because even the Jews denial of Christ was in the foreordained plans and purposes of God's will and His eternal plan of salvation for all mankind. How true are the words of Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

**Jesus miracles authenticated he was sent by God:** the miracles Jesus performed authenticated and testified that he was the prophet to come like Moses, the promised Seed of Abraham and of David, Israel's Messiah the Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world. No man on earth could do the things Christ did without the full power of God flowing through him, thus his sign miracles evidenced that he was approved of God, sent by God, had God's favour and was God's beloved Son and the one Moses and all the prophet spoke of. We know Jesus miracles were to authenticated that he was sent by God the Father because when John the Baptist was in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one who is to come and Jesus answered them with the following majestic words: -

- Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me (Matt 11:2-6) (Luke 7:18-23).

It is stated in the Old Testament that the Christ will open the eyes of the blind, heal the ears of the deaf, cause the crippled to walk and the mute to speak with joy (Isaiah 29:1-24) (Isaiah 35:1-10) (Isaiah 42:1-10) all the miracles that Jesus did, and Jesus when speaking to the Jews said:

- The works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me and the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard (John 5:36-37).

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## JOHN 11:49-54

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### **It is better that One Man Die for the People, not the Whole Nation.**

- **John 11:49-54:** But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup>Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." <sup>51</sup>He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup>So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. <sup>54</sup>Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

**Ephraim:** was named after a son of Joseph and became the name the ten tribes of Israel who revolted from house of David. The territory of Ephraim is in Samaria and included two worship centers one was at Bethel and the other in Shiloh (1 Kings 12:25) (2 Chron. 10:16).

**The Jewish council:** the Jewish Council gathered together to discuss what to do with Jesus, they feared if everyone believed in Jesus the Romans would take their authority and their position over the Jewish

nation away from them so Caiaphas the High Priest tells them it is better to kill Jesus than for them to lose their authority and power over the nation Israel (v48). The words:

- Caiaphas did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation and gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (v51-52).

Do not necessarily mean that he knew Jesus would be crucified and resurrected since it is stated he did not say this of his own accord) (v51). Caiaphas suggested killing Jesus so that the Romans would not take his and the Pharisees and scribes authority over the Jewish nation from them, he believed Jesus was scattering the Jewish nation from their one belief in Moses Law and most likely reasoned if they kill Jesus all the scattered Jews who were following him would come back to the Pharisees and the law so they were highly motivated and driven to have him killed.

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## JOHN 11:55-57

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### **The Chief Priests and the Pharisees seek to Arrest Jesus.**

- **John 11:55-57:** Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup>They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" <sup>57</sup>Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Jesus knowing the religious authorities were single-minded in their determination to kill him no longer walked openly among the Jews. Almost every Jew who could would go up to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Passover so there would have been an enormous crowd of Jews all talking about the man named Jesus.

**The parable of the rich man and Lazarus:** in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man is pictured being in torment and begging Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers to warn them not to come into this place of torment. The rich man believed if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent and believe, but Abraham said:

- If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

How fantastic is the word of God, Jesus not only raises a dead man, but his name is Lazarus and the rich man's five brothers (a symbol of the Jews especially the religious rulers) still did not repent and believe in fact they became even more determined to find ways to murder him. For the full story of the Rich man and Lazarus see:

- Luke 16 in, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## The Jewish people and Jesus today

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Though the Jewish nation had the most convincing evidence, the most powerful preaching, the clearest call from Christ himself and from his apostles, ever since the first preaching of the Good News of the Gospel of grace multitudes of them have remained even to this day hardened and blinded to the glory of God's grace in Christ by their obstinacy and unbelief from generation to generation. In (2011) I attended a public meeting in which an Israeli lecturer who travelled the world speaking for the Jews today and about Israel's land and their history as recorded in the Bible. At the end of her lecture the meeting was opened up to the audience for questions. One lady asked:

- “How do the Jews view Jesus today?”

The Jewish speakers’ answerer was:

- “Our Messiah has not yet come.”

There was a sudden silence over the meeting at this moment, then the same lady obviously a Christian quoted a few Scriptures to show that Israel’s Messiah did come, the lecturer was kindly patient, but after a short while turned and picked up a Jewish Bible, held it in the air and said:

- “This is our Bible and there is no New Testament in it.”

A man stood up and asked:

- “How do the Jewish people view a Jew who converts to Christianity?”

The speakers replied:

- “We would consider that they have left the faith.”

As she spoke it was clear that the Jewish people love God and love their Messiah the promised seed of Abraham and David, they just haven’t recognised him yet (and even this is in God’s eternal plan) but it reminded me of the following fabulous and prophetic words of Zechariah:

- The LORD will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great, the land and the priests shall mourn, and all the families that are left each by itself shall morn (Zech. 12:9-14).

When this momentous and beautiful moment takes place, the entire world will change as we know it today, and a glorious New Age will begin, one of righteousness, justice, joy and peace because the King of peace will be the Head and Shepherd of all nations.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*