

UPPER ROOM ADULT BIBLE STUDY

"The Gospel of John"

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Lesson 46: John 11:5-12:11 "The Eyes of Faith See Differently"

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ 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.

¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

- a. "So, when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two day longer" – at first glance, it would seem that Jesus was quite indifferent to Lazarus' illness! From a faith perspective, Jesus already knew what He would do – and how the story would end. Seeing there is no turning the Jewish authorities' hearts to faith in Him, He doubles His effort to strengthen His disciples' faith!

a. The "eyes" of faith learn to see things differently:

- i. God is in charge.
- ii. He glorifies Himself in our world.
- iii. He loves us (not even death can separate us from His love).
- iv. He works things out for our "good." (Romans 8:23)
- v. He shapes us to be more like Him."
- vi. He calls us to walk by faith, not by sight.

- b. "Then, after this... 'Let us go to Judea again.'" – Jesus' life had been threatened by the Sanhedrin. His disciples saw no value in returning there.
- c. "day...not stumble...he sees the light" – Jesus' play on words: "day," "light." In the same way that stumbling is reduced because of daylight, spiritual stumbling is not likely, as long a believer "sees the light" (Jesus).
- d. "night...stumbles...the light is not in him" – "walking in the dark" is the equivalent of living in the despair of unbelief. Jesus' words remind us of the prophet *Isaiah 9:2*. *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin,^[b] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

- a. "fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." – Jesus' play on words confused His disciples. St Paul used the phrase "fallen asleep" to describe Christians in death.

This was not accidental, as the emphasis is on “waking up,” in the resurrection of the dead.

- a. **1 Corinthians 11:30.** *“That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”*
 - b. **1 Corinthians 15:6.** *“After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.”*
 - c. **1 Corinthians 15:20** *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”*
 - d. **1 Thessalonians 4:14** *“For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”*
- b. **“for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.”** – Jesus is about to demonstrate His divinity in a profound manner: raising the dead. His intent is to bless Mary and Martha’s family AND to give His disciples an empowering lesson of what God can do.
- c. **“Thomas...that we may die with him.”** – Thomas, the ‘prove-it-to-me realist’ was, at times, a fatalist. He knew the Jews would be gunning for Jesus after attempting to stone Him to death. What is striking here, is that Thomas was willing to follow Jesus – even to death, if that is what would happen!
- a. **Christians, today, are increasingly confronted by people who are much like Thomas – though unwilling to follow Jesus.**
 - b. **Christians walk a line of the tension between common sense/rationalism (walking by sight) and faith (walking by faith, not by sight).**
 - c. **Post-modern thought asserts that Christians are ignorant of rational thought, and simply use their religion as a way of medicating their anxiety – in order to feel better.**
 - d. **How would you respond to such an assertion?**
 - e. **What guidance does Jesus provide (in this case)?**

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles^[c] off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.^[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

- a. **"Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days."** – Having already died, Lazarus' body would have been buried in a tomb, according to local customs. His body would have begun the deterioration process after 4 days. He was truly dead!
- b. **"Martha said... 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"** – Martha is often given a bad rap, as the more obsessive of the two sisters – worried when Jesus came for lunch and angry that Mary wouldn't help her. Her faith in Jesus is strong, "if you had been here."
- c. **"I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."** – Martha's faith extended to understanding Jesus' relationship to His Father. A subtle, but clear request of faith, willing to submit her emotional wishes to whatever decision Jesus would make!
- d. **"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection..."** – Martha's understanding of death and resurrection is profound!
- e. **"I am the resurrection and the life."** – Jesus asserts His divinity: "I AM." He is the very power of God to create new life out of nothing; or out of death!
- f. **"Whoever believes... though he die... he live... shall never die."** – Jesus double-layers the meaning of "live/die" and "life/death." Physical life and death are temporal and limited to this world. Spiritual life and death give greater meaning and hope to the struggles of an sinful world.
- g. **"She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord. I believe...'"** – Martha's professional of faith went beyond their friendship. She was a woman of great trust in Jesus!