

But Jesus "went forth out of their hand." How this was accomplished is purely conjectural on our part and so we simply accept the statement of the gospel writer. He retired to the place where John the Baptist was at the first baptizing which was probably Bethany beyond the Jordan (cf. Map #1, Vol. 1, p. 17). He evidently stayed there for a considerable length of time seeking rest, private communion with the Father in the environment of one of His momentous spiritual experiences—His own baptism and audible approval by the Father. He was not there long, however, until the crowds of the common people who always followed Him found Him and came to Him.

The memories of the people were also vividly aroused as they gathered here and heard Jesus teach and saw His signs. They remembered all that the great man, John the Baptist, had said about this One. They remembered that the Baptist in all his greatness had done no signs—yet it was evident that he was God-sent. Thus the wisdom of Jesus' words and the divine nature of His works confirmed the testimony of the Baptist and many believed on Jesus there. Jesus then went on to exercise a short ministry in Perea before He returned to Judea at the call of the sisters of Lazarus (cf. Map #6, p. 117-A).

Quiz

1. Upon what kind of evidence does Jesus rest His claim to deity?
2. Why were the Jews blind to the evidence of His works?
3. What does ". . . and the scripture cannot be broken" mean?
4. Why was it necessary that God give evidence for His nature and will that man could see, hear, feel and touch?
5. What are the three characteristics of man that must be exercised in true belief?
6. Which of these three is of primary importance?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. TEN

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

John 10:1-16

Introduction

I. WHY DID JESUS USE THIS ALLEGORY?

- A. The Jewish rulers and Pharisees had just exhibited themselves as hirelings when they were supposed to be shepherds by casting out the blind man (John 9) (cf. also Ezek. 34:1).

- B. This was a term which Jesus used elsewhere to refer to the rulers and the people (cf. Matt. 9:36; Mk. 6:34).
 - C. The Old Testament is filled with this beautiful picture (cf. Psa. 23; Ezek. 34, etc.). Many prophetic passages depict the Messiah coming as a shepherd (cf. Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:23).
- FOR THESE REASONS JESUS USED THIS ALLEGORY.

II. THIS ALLEGORICAL PICTURE WAS FAMILIAR TO THE PEOPLE

- A. For us to fully understand the depth of this allegory we need to study just how the shepherds of that place and time worked.
- B. Life was very hard for these shepherds. They were never off duty. There was little grass and the sheep were bound to wander often. There were no protecting fences and the sheep had to be watched every moment lest they get lost or be attacked by wild animals or robbers.
- C. Constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock were the necessary characteristics of the Palestinian shepherd.

Discussion

I. THE SHEPHERD

- A. He knows his sheep. In Palestine the sheep are often with the shepherd for years. Often the sheep have names by which the shepherd calls them. They are each one known by name and by their individuality.
 1. Jesus knows every one of His sheep by name, occupation and address (cf. Saul of Tarsus, Ananias of Damascus; Simon the tanner of Joppa; Cornelius, etc.). He knows all men and needs not that any one bear witness to man for He Himself made man.
 2. He knows what man needs—knows that man has higher aspirations and needs higher goals and aims than mere animal satisfactions. He knows that man is both reasonable and emotional and appeals to both sides of man's nature. He knows that man needs a power beyond himself. JESUS SUPPLIES ALL THESE NEEDS. HE GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF PERFECTION TOWARD WHICH MAN MUST STRIVE; HE APPEALS BOTH TO THE REASON

AND EMOTIONS OF MAN THROUGH HIS WORD; HE GIVES MAN A POWER THAT IS ABLE TO SAVE HIS SOUL AND REGENERATE HIS LIFE THROUGH THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD.

3. The Great Shepherd knows us better than we know ourselves. Our trouble is that we do not trust Him enough to let Him have His way with us. He knows every man's problems and has the answer for each (He has the answer for broken homes; death; despondency; fear; anxiety; anger). He knows the secret hurts, secret longings and secret evils harbored in our hearts. He knows how we are tempted—He knows the strong desires of the flesh as they war against the spirit. He also knows that it is possible to resist the flesh (cf. Matt. 4:1-11)!
 4. He does not shepherd us en masse, but as individuals. He guarded His little flock of twelve as individuals. He knew Peter's impetuosity, Thomas' incredulity, the fire of James and John, the guilelessness of Nathanael, the thievery of Judas, the political zeal of Simon. **INDEED THE SHEPHERD KNOWS YOU LIKE NO ONE ELSE KNOWS YOU—BETTER EVEN THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF.**
- B. The Shepherd leads His sheep. He goes before the sheep. In Palestine the shepherd always went before his sheep and the sheep followed. The shepherd went first to see that the path was safe and that there were no hidden dangers. Sometimes the sheep had to be encouraged to follow. A traveler tells how he saw a shepherd leading his flock come to a ford in the stream. The sheep were unwilling to cross. The shepherd finally solved the problem by carrying one of the lambs across. When the mother of the lamb saw her lamb on the other side she crossed, too, and soon all the rest of the flock had followed her.
1. Our Shepherd has said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me," and so He took up His cross and led the way. He has said, "Be baptized," and He walked over 70 miles to be baptized of John the Baptist as He led the way. He has said, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier . . ." and He has led the way in suffering. He has said, "You will receive joy and abundance of joy" and He has shown the way. He has said, "Have compassion, forgive, love"

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

and He has led the way. **WHATEVER BE THE ROAD YOU MUST TRAVEL, THE SHEPHERD HAS BEEN THERE BEFORE YOU TO SHOW THE WAY!**

2. We glibly sing, "Where He leads me I will follow," but seldom follow where He leads. He leads to green pastures and feeds us fully on His Word (not on material luxuries). He leads beside the still and placid waters of safety and peace of soul (but not peace as this world thinks of peace). He also leads through the valley of the shadow often. The chastening of these dark valleys are sometimes necessary, for we learn to follow and depend upon the Shepherd more completely through these vales of tears, suffering and sorrows. He knows us well enough to know that at times this is the only way we will follow Him. Paul looked through a veil of tears and suffering all of his life here as a Christian. Notice how tenderly and patiently (rebuking when necessary) Jesus led the twelve disciples.
- C. There are hireling shepherds. They enter the fold not by the Door—Christ and His teachings. The hireling disregards God's authority. He does not really believe—he simply accommodates himself to the situation. The hireling has no concern for the sheep. He will not lay down his life for them. When the flock is endangered he surrenders or flees. When the sheep stray he is unconcerned and lets them go their own way without correcting them. When the wolves from without and from within attack the flock he loses his courage and runs.
1. The hireling is the preacher who has no spine and will not stand for the truth. When threatened with dismissal, he will compromise the Gospel rather than lose his pay check.
 2. The hireling is the elder or deacon who resigns rather than face the troubles and troublemakers of the church. Such hirelings see in the eldership only position, and prestige, while service, loving service, is the demand for shepherds of God's flock. The hireling is the Sunday School teacher who waters down the demands of the Gospel plan of salvation or holy living rather than allow a class member to think he is narrow-minded.
- D. The wolf against whom the flock of God is to be protected is more fierce than any animal. He is supernatural—he has powers we do not have. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." How eternally important it is that we have a Divine Shepherd.

II. THE SHEEP

- A. They know the Shepherd. Many people today have deluded themselves into thinking they are the flock of Christ when they do not even know the Shepherd. God's people of the Old Testament lost their relationship to Him as Shepherd because they did not know Him. Hosea said the people were "perishing" because of lack of knowledge of their Shepherd (cf. also I Kings 22:17 Zech. 10:2). They refused to be fed by God their Shepherd. They sought the earthly pleasures offered by the hireling shepherds.
1. There is an alarming ignorance of Christ and His word, even among those who are professed believers. It is no wonder the world is in such a state of affairs. It is no wonder that the church loses about as many converts as she gains. The sheep must be fed. Elders, shepherds of the flock, must see to it that the members have opportunities and motivation to feed on the Bread of Life. Elders and evangelists (preachers) have no right to say, "We offer it, if they don't take it, it is not our fault." If these shepherds of the flock had a sick son or daughter, dying of malnutrition, they would try every way possible to coax them to eat. As shepherds of the flock "as those that shall give account," you have brothers and sisters in Christ dying of spiritual malnutrition—FEED THEM!
 2. We know Him through His word, through what He has revealed to us. But how many of the sheep read their Bibles even thirty minutes each day in order to know Him better? Some take over three hours each day to eat bread and potatoes, but not even three minutes per day to partake of the food that perishes not.
 3. We know Him by speaking to Him in prayer. But how many of the sheep spend fifteen minutes per day in prayer? Most people spend more time than that talking on the telephone each day. God has *never* heard the voice of many people ever lifted to Him in prayer!
 4. We know Him by doing His will—by following Him. One of the best ways to know and trust the Shepherd is to do what He says and learn of the wisdom of His commands.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

But how many of the sheep "seek first the kingdom of God," trusting Him to add all the necessities of life? How many trust Him enough to test His commands to go out and sow the seed and then expect fruits?

5. "If any man willeth to do my will, he will know . . ."
WHEN WE HAVE WALKED WITH HIM BY OBEDIENCE — WHEN WE HAVE TALKED WITH HIM THROUGH THE BIBLE — THEN WE BEGIN TO KNOW THE SHEPHERD AS WE OUGHT TO KNOW HIM!

- B. The Sheep know His voice. It is true of Palestinian sheep that they know the tone of their shepherd's voice. Not only so, but they will follow only that voice and will flee when they hear a stranger's voice.
1. The true sheep of Christ know the difference between the true Shepherd and false shepherds. They know false doctrines whenever and by whomever they are taught.
 2. No man need think he will remain long in the flock of God if he cannot distinguish the Shepherd's voice from the voice of the thief and robber.
- C. They follow Him. Knowing the shepherd's voice and following it are two different things. Some who know the Bible thoroughly do not obey it. We cannot be one of God's flock without obeying God's Shepherd, Jesus Christ. There is but *ONE FLOCK* and *ONE SHEPHERD*.

Conclusion

I. THE SHEPHERD

- A. He knows—temptations, needs, obedience.
- B. He leads—the way of the cross, into joy, through trials.
- C. He has all the answers for our lives . . . He can satisfy as none other.

II. THE SHEEP

- A. Know Him—walk, talk and listen to Him.
- B. Follow Him—they imitate Him, obey His voice.

III. ONE DARK VALLEY MUST BE CROSSED BY ALL

- A. The valley of the shadow of death.
- B. When you approach this valley, will you be able to see Jesus, your Shepherd, there with His hand outstretched, saying, *Follow me?*

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

HE HAS WALKED THE VALLEY BEFORE YOU . . . YOU CAN TRUST HIM. YOU CAN TAKE HIS HAND, FOR HE WILL LEAD YOU THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE WHERE THERE ARE GREEN PASTURES, THE TREE OF LIFE, AND THE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE.

BUT IF HE IS NOT YOUR SHEPHERD, WHOM CAN YOU TRUST? WHO WILL BE THERE TO TAKE YOU THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH? HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS BEEN THERE AND IS ABLE TO LEAD YOU THROUGH.

LISTEN TO HIS PLEADING, COAXING VOICE TODAY. TENDERLY HE'S CALLING, HEAR HIS VOICE AND FOLLOW THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

EXAMINATION, CHAPTERS 9 and 10 *What Did These Say*

About the Blind Man:

1. The disciples:
2. Jesus:
3. The neighbors:
4. The parents:
5. The Pharisees:

Explain These Statements

1. Jesus: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
2. The blind beggar: "I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?"
3. The blind beggar: "We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth."
4. Jesus: "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind."
5. Jesus: "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth."

True or False?

1. An allegory is the same as a parable.
2. Jesus is referring strictly to Himself as the shepherd in 10:2.
3. The "one flock" of 10:16 refers to the New Testament church.
4. There is an extensive interval of time between 10:21 and 10:22.
5. The Old Testament gives directions for the Feast of Dedication in the book of Leviticus.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Make a List of

1. Four things Jesus says about both a shepherd and the Good Shepherd.
2. Three things Jesus says about the hireling.
3. Five things Jesus says about His sheep.
4. Two things to which Jesus appealed to substantiate His claim to be the Son of God.

Locate These Places

1. Pool of Siloam.
2. Solomon's porch.
3. The place where John was at the first baptizing.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"I am the Resurrection and the Life"—this chapter must have no other title but this written over it. It is filled with comfort and strength in its revelation that Jesus holds death and life in His hands. It is a touchstone of evidence for the deity of Jesus. It shows the emotions of the very heart of the Master as He weeps for those whom He loves. Used as the text for countless thousands of funeral sermons it still remains the most vital and appropriate text for such occasions. We also see the frustration and malice of the Jewish rulers as they hold their murderous council.

The eleventh chapter tells of one incident among many in a Later Perea Ministry of about three months. After the Feast of Dedication Jesus retired into the region of Perea (cf. Jn. 10:40-42). In the interval between the feast and the raising of Lazarus He makes an evangelistic tour of Perea; dines in the home of a Pharisee; delivers the parables of the lost sheep, coin and son; parables of unjust steward, Lazarus and rich man and unprofitable servants. After the raising of Lazarus, many other incidents transpire before Jesus approaches (Jn. 12) Jerusalem for the final Passover (cf. Map #6, page 117A).

Let us, then, outline chapter eleven, following our general outline of the entire gospel of John, in this manner:

II The Word Manifested to the Jews and their Rejection of Him,

1:19—12:50

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

4. Later Perea Ministry, 11:1—11:57

a. A Man Dies for a Purpose, 11:7-16

b. The Purpose explained, 11:7-16

c. I Am The Resurrection and the Life, 11:17-27

d. Jesus Wept, 11:28-37

e. He That Was Dead Came Forth, 11:38-46

f. Politics and Murder, 11:47-57

A MAN DIES FOR A PURPOSE

Text 11:1-6

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 And it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

3 The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was.

Queries

- a. When did Mary anoint the head of Jesus?
- b. Why say the sickness was not unto death?
- c. Why wait two days after receiving the bad news?

Paraphrase

Now there was a certain man who became seriously ill; this man was Lazarus of Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (This is the same Mary who would anoint the Lord with perfume and wipe his feet with her hair, and Lazarus, the man who was ill, was her brother.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus saying, Lord, look! the one whom you love is seriously ill. When Jesus heard this message he replied, Death will not be the final result of this sickness. This sickness will ultimately end in the glory of God and especially will the glory of the Son of God be shown through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But after he heard of Lazarus' illness he stayed two more days where he was in Perea.

Summary

Lazarus, of whom Jesus was especially fond as a friend, is seriously ill even at the point of death. But Jesus, with His divine foreknowledge, knows that although Lazarus will die he will be resurrected to the glory of the Father and the Son.

Comment

The gospel writer, John, is careful to identify the people involved in this glorious event. The Lazarus is distinguished from others (cf. Lk. 16:20) of the same name. The name Lazarus means "he whom God helped." Even this village of Bethany is distinguished from the "Bethany beyond the Jordan." This village is the Bethany where Mary

and Martha lived—the small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, a “suburb” of Jerusalem. There are so many Marys in the gospels that John must also identify this Mary as the one who anointed the Lord with perfume. The word *anointed* is in the aorist tense in the Greek. The aorist tense is the “snap-shot” tense and does not necessarily mean the anointing happened in the past. We believe John simply uses an anachronism (statement of an event out of its historical sequence) here as he does with the betrayal of Judas later. The anointing by Mary took place just before the Triumphal Entry (Jn. 12) but John, writing years later, mentions it out of sequence to identify Mary. This anointing is not to be confused with the event of the sinful woman who wiped Jesus’ feet with her hair (cf. Lk. 7:36-50), but is the same anointing that is described by Matthew (Matt. 26:6-13), and Mark (Mk. 14:3-9).

The emphatic nature of the language used and the sending of the messenger the long distance into Perea indicates urgency. Lazarus was seriously ill and probably not expected to recover unless the Great Healer came at once! The messenger was instructed to be emphatic so he said, “Behold! the one whom you dearly love is at the point of death!” The word the sisters use for love is *phileo* which has a different shade of meaning in some instances than *agapao*. The words are also used interchangeably. We shall discuss them further in John 20.

The brevity of the Lord’s answer (at least the brevity with which it is recorded) *seems* to be a cold shrugging-off of the urgency of the sisters. No doubt the disciples understood Him to mean that the illness was not as serious as the messenger believed. But the Son of God was never more in command of the situation—never more tender and compassionate in His plans for all concerned. All that He will offer at the moment in the way of consolation is the prediction that the sickness of Lazarus will not end finally in death (although Jesus knew Lazarus would die), but in the ultimate glory of God the Father and God the Son.

John now inserts the important parenthetical statement, “Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus.” This is to inform the reader of his gospel record that Jesus was not turning His back upon their plea for help by His brief answer and intentional delay in Perea for two days. Something of significance seems to be inferred from the emphasis on Jesus’ love for Lazarus, Mary and Martha here. Jesus was both divine and human. On the human side He had very few really close friends in whom He might confide, and trust. Members of His own family were unbelievers and not even His disciples seems to have been sym-

pathetic with all His needs for such close friendship. Mary had some deep intimations within her of His approaching death (which is more than the disciples understood) when she anointed Him. What a great source of comfort this family must have been to the One with the shadow of the cross upon Him.

As Foster points out, the verse (v. 5) may mean that because Jesus loved them, He tarried, having something greater in store for them all than the mere healing of a sick man.

The primary objective in His delay was that upon Lazarus' death the Father and the Son would be glorified when the Son should raise him from the tomb (especially after the body had begun to deteriorate). But another purpose is stated in 11:15, the strengthening of the faith of the disciples. This resurrection, of course, would result also in the strengthening of the faith of the family of Lazarus. As Hendriksen says, "Hence, what may have looked like a cruel delay was in reality the tenderest concern for the spiritual welfare of true disciples." What would be the best way to give all concerned a faith and hope in Him as the resurrection and life?—to heal a sick man or to raise one from the dead whose body was already decaying? Which would give more glory to God? Raising of Lazarus from the dead, of course!

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

Quiz

1. Why does John mention the anointing by Mary out of its historical sequence?
2. What does the repetition of the fact that Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha indicate as to Jesus' human nature?
3. What two things did Jesus have in mind by waiting until Lazarus was dead before He answered the plea of the sisters?
4. What may we learn from these recorded instances of the "mysterious" ways in which the Lord works?

THE PURPOSE EXPLAINED

Text 11:7-16

7 Then after this he saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

8 The disciples say unto him, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.

11 These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

12 The disciples therefore said unto him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover.

13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death: but they thought that he spake of taking rest in sleep.

14 Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

16 Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Queries

- a. Why the dissertation on "walking in the daylight"?
- b. Why was Jesus "glad" at not being present when Lazarus died?
- c. With whom did Thomas plan to die?

Paraphrase

At the end of two days Jesus said to His disciples, Let us return to Judea. The disciples were shocked and said to Him, Master, the Jews are even at this very hour seeking to stone you to death—and you are going to return to Judea? Jesus answered, Are there not a certain number of allotted hours of light for the day wherein a man is to work and walk? If a man walks in these allotted hours of light he need not fear obstacles or enemies. But if a man does not avail himself of the God-allotted light and walks in darkness he will stumble and be overcome because the light does not illuminate his path. After speaking these words Jesus said to His disciples, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep and I am returning to Judea in order to awaken him out of this sleep. Hearing this the disciples replied, Lord, if he has merely fallen asleep he will all the better recover from his sickness.

(Now Jesus was speaking of Lazarus' death; however, the disciples thought He was speaking about the repose of sleep.) Then Jesus said to them plainly and openly, Lazarus is dead! For your sakes I am glad that I was not present when he died in order that what subsequently transpires may strengthen your faith in Me. Let us then go to Judea and to Lazarus. Then Thomas, who is called Twin, spoke boldly to his fellow-disciples, If our Master is determined to return to Judea, let us also go that we may die with him!

Summary

After a delay Jesus now announces His determination to return to Judea. The disciples warn Him of the animosity of the Jews. Jesus tries to allay their fears by telling them that His intended return is within the divine plan of His Father and for the purpose of strengthening their faith. Thomas exhorts his fellow-disciples to courageously prepare to die with Jesus.

Comment

The disciples had never been given cause to doubt the bravery and courage of their Master. In fact, He displayed the most dauntless courage time after time. But now His expressed intention to return to Judea is looked upon by the disciples as foolhardiness.

Verses 9 and 10 is another of the Lord's enigmatic figures by which He sought to stimulate the spiritual discernment of the disciples. Taken in its context and considering another statement (Jn. 9:4-5) of parallel figurativeness, we understand Jesus to be telling the disciples *by this figure* that it is safe to return to Judea because His hour has not yet come. Just as there is a certain amount of daylight hours allotted by God in which man can walk and work without fear of obstacles and enemies because he has light, so there is an allotted time in which the Son of God must accomplish His earthly ministry. The disciples have expressed urgent concern for His safety, but Jesus counters with this figurative affirmation that the time within the divine plan of the Father for His death is not yet, therefore they may safely return to Judea. Notice the similarity of thought between verses 9 and 10 here and John 9:4-5: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As Lenski puts it, "To walk and not to stumble means to go on with our life's work"; (as God has given to each one of us an allotted day in which to work) "to stumble means to come to the end of our life's work . . ." (Interp. of St. John's Gospel, p. 787, R. C. H. Lenski) (parenthesis mine).

Jesus goes from one figure to another immediately. Again He uses the enigmatic metaphor of "sleep" for "death" to excite their spiritual understanding. There may be two reasons for speaking of death thus: (a) to soften the harshness of the reality of death, and, (b) to re-emphasize His first statement, "This sickness is not unto death . . .," i.e., to hint more strongly at a resurrection from death. Throughout the Scriptures the word "sleep" is applied to death to intimate that death will not be final. It is used to comfort believers and remove all that is stark and dreadful about death. Below are a few of the other comforting references to believer's death:

- a. Precious in the sight of Jehovah, Psa. 116:15
- b. Carried away by the angels, Lk. 16:22
- c. Being in Paradise with Jesus, Lk. 23:43
- d. Going to a place with many dwelling places, Jn. 14:2
- e. A longed for departure, Phi. 1:23; II Tim. 4:6
- f. To be with Christ—at home with the Lord, Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:8
- g. A very far better gain, Phil. 1:21, 23
- h. A rest from labors, Rev. 14:13

It is well to mention here that the mere reference to death as "sleep" does not teach the doctrine of "soul-sleeping." As Hendriksen comments, "Though the soul is asleep to the world which it has left it is awake with respect to its own world" (cf. Lk. 16:19-31; 23:43; II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23; Rev. 7:15-17; 20:4).

But the disciples took Jesus literally. If Lazarus was sick and had finally found restful repose, their opinion was that he would recover for it was said among the Jews that "sleep in sickness is a sign of recovery, because it shows that the violence of the disease has abated." (Lightfoot)

So Jesus now felt the time was right to speak openly and plainly to the disciples. He wants to let them know that He knows Lazarus is dead and that his death is going to result in further evidence for their belief in Jesus. This, then, is the higher purpose that will be served by the death of Lazarus (cf. 11:4). Jesus was preparing these men to witness His greatest miracle (excepting, of course, His own resurrection). As one commentator has said, ". . . a miracle comes to be wrought that exceeds in its revelation of the glory of the Father and the Son all the other miracles of Jesus, that brings the most wonderful blessings to those that behold and believe."

Seeing the determination of Jesus to return into the face of the enraged rulers in Judea, Thomas resigns himself to go with his Master even if it means death by stoning. There is no reason to think Thomas is referring to Lazarus as the one with whom he is resigned to die. He is probably not certain yet whether Lazarus is sick or dead—but he is sure, as are the others, that if Jesus returns to Judea He faces certain death. The apostles were courageous men. One wonders if, when Jesus was about to be arrested, He had called upon them to fight they would not have fought valiantly (cf. Jn. 18:10-11). Peter was ready to die with Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:35)—but when Jesus submitted willingly to the humiliating torture and mockery, the disciples fled. This was not their idea of a Messiah—if He had fought they were ready and were courageous—they were not cowards. But humiliation—that was another story.

The groundwork has been laid well. The disciples are certain they face death in Judea. But Jesus knows they will see Him in all His glory as The Resurrection and the Life.

Quiz

1. What is the message behind the enigmatic statement of verses 9 and 10?
2. When Jesus said that Lazarus was "asleep" did He mean that the soul is unconscious after death? Prove your answer by Scripture references.
3. What is the significance of the Lord's use of the word "sleep" to refer to death?
4. What is the ultimate purpose of the raising of Lazarus?
5. What of Thomas' statement, ". . . that we may die with him." Was it bravery, cowardice or pessimism?

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Text 11:17-27

17 So when Jesus came, he found that he had been in the tomb four days already.

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

19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary still sat in the house.

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

22 And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give 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 on me though he die, yet shall he live;

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

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world.

Queries

- a. Who were the Jews "consoling" Martha and Mary?
- b. What is Martha's attitude toward Jesus in verses 21-22?
- c. Does Jesus adequately answer Martha's longing in verses 23-26?

Paraphrase

So when Jesus arrived in Bethany, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Quite a number of the Jews of the city of Jerusalem had come out to Martha and Mary, Bethany being only about two miles from Jerusalem, to console them and mourn with them over their brother's death. When Martha was told that Jesus was on His way, she went out alone to meet Him—Mary stayed in the house. When Martha met Jesus she said to Him, Master, if you had only been able to get here in time my brother would not have died from his sickness. But even now, with my brother dead, I am sure that whatever you might ask of God, God will grant it. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha replied, Yes, Master, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. At this, Jesus said to her, I am even now the source of resurrection and the life that is eternal. Though a man may die physically, if he has believed in Me and obeyed Me he will live forever. Yes, whoever lives a life of obedient faith in Me never really dies. Do you believe this, Martha? She replied, Yes, Master, I have believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of God—even the One whom the prophets foretold would come into the world.

Summary

Jesus finally arrives near Bethany four days after Lazarus' burial. Martha, informed of His approach, goes forth to meet Him. She expresses faith in Jesus, but in her sorrow her faith needs to be strengthened. Jesus challenges her to complete trust in Him—she confesses her faith in His deity as the Son of God.

Comment

There is no need to speculate on when Lazarus died (whether before the messenger arrived where Jesus was in Perea, or whether he died after the messenger returned to Bethany). We know that Jesus purposely waited until he was dead (cf. Jn. 11:14-15), that Jesus knew *when* Lazarus was dead; we therefore assume that He purposely did not hurry from Perea to Bethany, waiting until the body of Lazarus would start its decomposition in order that the miraculous raising would have even greater significance.

The statement of verse 19 that many of the Jews had come to the home of Mary and Martha may indicate two things. First, it may infer that Lazarus and his sisters were well thought of by many people. Second, it may mean that his funeral was a "big" funeral. Those families who could afford it usually hired mourners for Jewish funerals (cf. Eccl. 12:5; Jere. 9:17; Am. 5:16). Generally a meal was prepared for those attending the funeral after the entombment when they would "eat the bread of mourners" (cf. II Sam. 3:35; Hos. 9:4; Ezek. 24:17, 24). We know that all those attending the funeral were not friends of Lazarus. Some had undoubtedly been sent there by the rulers of the Jews to see if Jesus would come from His "hiding place" at the death of His beloved friend. Others of the Jews, neither avowed enemies nor avowed friends of Jesus, may have been there out of mere curiosity. Knowing, however, our Lord's estimation of Lazarus, we believe the greater portion of those at the home of the sisters were there out of their respect for the deceased who was undoubtedly a man of compassion and good works. John's explanation for one of the causes for a great crowd was the relatively short distance (15 stadia) of Bethany from Jerusalem—about two miles.

Martha, upon hearing that Jesus was arriving, probably hurried to meet Him outside the village in order that she might speak to Him privately. Her first words were, "If you had been here (or gotten here in time) my brother would not have died." Martha, knowing His past miracles of healing the sick, believed firmly in Jesus' ability to heal her sick brother—if only He had been there before Lazarus had died.

The next statement, verse 22, hints of her belief that even in the face of her brother's death Jesus will somehow rectify the situation. This short conversation of Martha with Jesus indicates that Martha had a beautiful, tenacious faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It had not yet blossomed into full trust in Him as the Resurrection and the Life and it was to this end that Jesus coaxed and fanned the flame of faith

within her heart. She certainly recognized that God was working through Jesus. Martha may have been the one who was before "cumbered about much serving," but she certainly maintained a strong belief in Jesus.

Watch now as Jesus seeks to lead Martha to a more perfect faith in His deity. It is as R. C. Foster says in his Syllabus, "A good teacher does not work everything out for the pupil, but gives just enough help to stimulate the utmost intellectual effort." So with the Great Teacher. He began to give obscure replies to her, as to His disciples beyond the Jordan. It was ever thus that He sought to draw out and enlarge the faith of those whom He would help." So Jesus simply said, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha quickly responded with her affirmation of belief in the final resurrection, verse 24. There are some of the liberal schools of theology who maintain that the Jews in the Old Testament did not believe in the future life. Or, if they did, they received their beliefs of the future life from heathen philosophies. For an excellent refutation of this impossible theory we refer you to Bro. R. C. Foster's essay entitled, "The Future Life." A few sample references from the Old Testament should suffice: I Kings 17:22; II Kings 4:35, 13:21, 2:11; Psa. 23; Isa. 14:9, 25:8, 26:19, 53:10-12, 66:24; Dan. 12:2. Further, Hebrews, 11th chapter, teaches that the O. T. saints looked forward to heaven.

Jesus takes another step. He is slowly but firmly laying the groundwork for the stupendous miracle that will soon take place. His statement, "I am the resurrection and the life," is one of the most significant and comprehensive statements He made. Here the Lord Jesus identifies Himself as the source of the resurrection—even of life itself (cf. John 1:4; Col. 1:16-17). Jesus is saying to Martha, in a veiled way, that even though her brother is physically dead he is alive. Death for the believer (physical death, which is the mere separation of the soul from the body) is the mere beginning of life that is life indeed (cf. Phil. 1:21-23; II Cor. 5:1-8). Jesus claimed the same power months before at the Passover (John 5:19-29). Certainly He is the resurrection and life at the last day—but He is even now the granter of life to her brother because of her brother's belief in Him. This is what Jesus challenges Martha to believe by asking, "Believest thou this?"

We doubt that Martha fully understood the significance of Jesus' claim (even as we do not fully understand it), but there can be little doubt as to her unreserved surrender to Jesus. To the challenge to

simply trust Him she answers, "Yes, Lord, I believe . . ." Considering the state of mind Martha must have been in, this confession expresses a *great faith*. Further consider that the miracle of her brother's resurrection had not yet occurred. How her faith and love for Jesus must have increased after the miracle.

Quiz

1. Why the mention of the fact that Lazarus had been dead four days?
2. How may the "many people" at Martha's home be explained?
3. What does verse 22 hint concerning Martha's faith in Jesus?
4. Why does Jesus make the obscure statement of verse 23?
5. Does the Old Testament teach a belief in the resurrection?
6. What is the significance of the statement, "I am the resurrection and the life"?
7. What of Martha's confession?

JESUS WEPT

Text 11:28-37

28 And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth thee.

29 And she, when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him.

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

31 The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there.

32 Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

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

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

35 Jesus wept.

36 The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him!

37 But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus call Mary out to meet Him?
- b. Why would Mary fall down at Jesus' feet?

c. What caused Jesus to weep?

Paraphrase

After Martha expressed her belief in Jesus she returned to the house and went in alone to her sister Mary and whispered to her secretly, The Teacher is here and is asking for you to come out and meet Him. Immediately upon getting this message Mary arose and started out to meet Him. (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village but was remaining at the place where Martha had met him.) When the Jews who were mourning with Mary in the house noticed that she had gone out in such a hurry, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep for her brother there. When Mary arrived at the place where Jesus was waiting, and saw Him, she fell at His feet sobbing, Lord if you had only been here my brother would not have died of his sickness. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had followed her also weeping, He was deeply moved in the spirit and visibly distressed but He asked gently, Where have you buried him? Then some of them said, Lord, come and we will show you. Jesus wept openly. Some of the Jews beholding this said, to one another, See how much he loved Lazarus! Others of the Jews said, But He opened the eyes of the blind man—why could He not have kept this man from dying?

Summary

Jesus, sending for Mary to meet Him, evidently wants to talk with her apart from the crowds. Aware of the deep grief of Mary and those who mourned for her brother, Jesus wept openly. The Divine Son of God and the Son of man manifested in Jesus—we behold His participation in the sufferings of our agonies.

Comment

As close as Jesus was to this family, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, we can understand why He sent Martha to tell Mary that He wished to see her apart from the crowds of mourners. This family had no doubt tenderly cared for and befriended Jesus when it seemed as if the whole nation was against Him (cf. Luke 10:38-42). Further, Mary, at least, was sympathetic with the tragic end which would culminate His ministry (cf. John 11:1 and 12:1-8; cf. also Matt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9)—when even the closest of the disciples could not foresee it. So Jesus wanted to speak with these beloved friends in privacy and strengthen their faith and comfort them.

Mary, hearing that the Master was asking for her, fled to His side. How we all ought to hear Him call and flee to His side when our hearts are broken with grief. Hear Him call, "Come unto me all ye

that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). They met somewhere outside the village proper. But their meeting was not as private as Jesus had wished for the Jews who had been with Mary in the house thought that she was going to the cemetery to mourn by her brother's tomb. We do not know why they followed her—perhaps out of curiosity, but more likely out of sympathy. Someone should be at her side there in the graveyard. A woman, so overcome with grief, should not be left all alone.

When Mary arrived where Jesus and His disciples were waiting, just outside the city, she fell down at His feet repeating what her sister had said to Him. "If you had only been here, my brother would not have died of his illness—you would have healed him." We believe this is expressive of the great faith of Mary in the Teacher. Of course, her faith was not yet strong enough to keep her from grief or from uttering the same lament that her sister had made. But which of us has such perfect faith? We believe that this manifestation of utter dependence upon Jesus in her hour of deep sorrow shows that Mary had as much faith in Him as Martha had just confessed.

Verses 33-35 picture the Son of God weeping unashamedly. Oh, sweet and comforting picture! The heart of God going out to suffering, sorrowing mankind in the tears of His Only Son. Our Saviour is not aloof and cold and unfeeling . . . "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Seeing the woe and deep grief which sin caused among men, Jesus was visibly troubled of spirit—so visibly overwrought that John remembered it and recorded it here. There were other times when Jesus was visibly troubled within because of sin and unbelief. He was "grieved" at the unbelief of the Jews (Mk. 3:5). He was troubled at the last supper over the one who was about to betray Him (Jn. 13:21). He was troubled of soul when the Greeks were brought to Him and He was made vividly aware of the cruel suffering He was about to endure (Jn. 12:27).

But there is more than agitation of spirit here. His heart was touched with their grief! He wept with those who were weeping (cf. Rom. 12:15). Soon He would shed tears of grief and sympathy for the rebellious people of Jerusalem (cf. Lk. 19:41-44) because, seeing pro-

phetically the future holocaust of the city's destruction in 70 A.D., He knew the terrible grief that would be theirs. We also know that He must have wept many times as He prayed (Heb. 5:7-9).

Does Jesus care,
when I've said good-by
To the dearest on earth to me,

And my sad heart aches,
till it nearly breaks—
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares.

This heart-touching demonstration of love by Jesus as He wept with Mary was not lost upon the Jews. They marvelled at His love for Lazarus. But many of them were critical of Him. No doubt some of the Jews knew that Martha and Mary had sent for Him when Lazarus was only ill—perhaps they felt that He should have come sooner and healed Lazarus. After all, He had just a few months before opened the eyes of the man born blind. On the other hand, perhaps this was not a criticism, but an expression of a halting faith.

In this section we have another of John's word-pictures of the Divine Son expressing His participation in the infirmities of His brethren of flesh and blood (cf. Heb. 2:14-18). When Jesus wept, He wept with Mary and Martha—but He also wept with all humanity.

Quiz

1. How close was the relationship of Jesus to this family—on the human side?
2. How does Mary express her dependence upon the Master here?
3. May we all have the same dependence upon Jesus?
4. Why was Jesus troubled in His soul? Can you give other incidents when He was thus troubled?
5. What is the significance of His tears? Did He cry at any other time? When?
6. What did the Jews say about His tears?
7. Were Jesus' tears only for Mary and Martha? Explain.

HE THAT WAS DEAD CAME FORTH

Text 11:38-46

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

39 Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time, the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days.

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

41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.

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

44 He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him.

46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.

Queries

- a. Why did Jesus continue to groan?
- b. Why did Jesus say Martha would see the "glory of God"?
- c. What was the purpose of the "loud" cry, v. 43?

Paraphrase

Upon hearing these expressions of grief and doubt Jesus again groaned deeply within Himself as He approached the tomb. Now the tomb of Lazarus was a cave-type tomb hewn out of the rock of the hillside and a huge round stone was rolled against its opening. Jesus then commanded some of the people, Roll away the stone from the tomb! But Martha, sister of the dead man, said, Lord, by now there will be the stench of decomposition for he has been in the tomb four days! Jesus replied, Did I not say to you, Martha, that if you have faith in Me you will see the glory of God manifested? While some were rolling the stone away from the tomb Jesus looked toward the heavens and prayed, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but I have prayed this especially

for the sake of these people standing here in order that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had prayed, Jesus called with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! Then out came the man who had been dead, his hands and feet bound with burial linen and with a burial napkin bound around his face. Jesus then commanded, Free him of the burial wrappings and let him go.

Upon seeing what Jesus had done, many of the Jews who had accompanied Mary to the tomb believed on Him. But some of them hurried off to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Summary

Jesus performs one of His greatest miracles. Both friends and enemies witness it. In many, faith in Jesus as the Son of God is strengthened. In others the miracle becomes an occasion for betraying Him to those who have vowed to kill Him.

Comment

After hearing the doubt expressed by the bystanders (v. 37) and coming to the tomb, the agitation of spirit that gripped His soul before (v. 33) caused Him to groan within again. Our Lord was deeply moved during this experience with His beloved friends of Bethany.

John inserts another of his incidental, but graphic, notes which helps to familiarize us with this family. The family burial place (Lazarus' tomb) was one probably hewn out of stone. It was cave-like—in the side of a hill, not a hole in the ground. The cave-type tombs were usually available only to the rich for only the rich could afford to have them hewn out of the rock. There are other indications that this family was one of above average financial means (cf. Jn. 12:1-3). These tombs cut into the side of a hill were usually sealed off with a huge circular (but flat) stone which rested in a sort of trough—along which it was rolled back and forth as necessary to gain entrance.

Jesus had no more than finished commanding, "Remove the stone from the entrance," when Martha, in a moment of mixed emotions, protested. No doubt the impropriety of opening the tomb allowing curious eyes to look upon the already decaying body, prompted, in part, her protest. But the reply of Jesus indicates that her faith was also wavering. In the Palestinian climate, and in view of the mechanics of burial in that day, it did not take long for decomposition to set in upon dead bodies. The dead were buried almost immediately upon death. Of course, the Hebrews (and all other peoples since) were never able to duplicate the embalming arts of the Egyptians. Egyptians knew a secret method of preserving bodies for centuries (even for milleniums) that has eluded man ever since their civilization melted into the dust.

According to Lenski, "The Egyptians disemboweled the body and removed the brain and then soaked the body in a chemical solution for seventy days and thus prevented decay." The Hebrews merely anointed the body, wrapped it in linen strips with fragrant spices sprinkled in the folds (cf. II Chron. 16:14).

However, the primary purpose behind John's recording Martha's statement is to increase for his readers the magnificence of the miracle that is about to take place. The resurrection of one who has been dead four days—even after decomposition has set in—precludes any possibility of enemies claiming that Lazarus was not really dead! Lazarus had not merely lapsed into a coma. The reader will please *take careful notice* that when the enemies of Jesus counseled about their strategy in answer to this miracle, not one minute inference can be found that Lazarus was not really dead—nor indeed, that the miracle had not really happened (cf. Jn. 11:47-53; 12:9-10, 17-19)!

So the Lord turns to Martha rebuking her mildly for her wavering faith after she had so positively expressed her confession of Him (v. 27).

As the stone was being rolled away, Jesus looked toward the heavens reverently and prayed. There is a noticeable contrast between our Lord's public prayers and the public prayers of many religious men today. His were brief; theirs long and extended. His were simple and conversational—though not at all disrespectful; theirs filled with impressive vocabulary and oratorical eloquence; (cf. Matt. 11:25-26; Lk. 10:21; 24:30; Jn. 12:27-28). The absolute and perfect faith Jesus has in His Father is shown in His prayer. He thanks the Father for answering Him through the miracle even before the miracle takes place. The prayer also shows the perfect oneness of Son and Father. But again, the prayer was not necessarily for Christ's benefit, but for the people standing there in His presence. He made sure that they would recognize His unique relationship to Jehovah by praying to Him just before the miracle. The emphasis is that He is working the miracle in complete harmony with God—He has been given a unique commission from the Father (cf. Jn. 5:19-36).

When He had thus prayed, He cried with a loud voice. He did not merely speak loudly, but, as the Greek verb *ekraugasen* indicates, He *cried loudly*. Again, the loud cry was for the benefit of the many people present. Jesus needed no loud cry to bring back the dead . . . just a touch or thought would have done. But to insure that all present would know Him as the source of the miracle He cried loudly.

He that was dead came forth! How cryptic! How our hearts burn within us for more detail concerning this great miracle—but nothing more is said. We are not even told how Lazarus was able to come out of the tomb bound, as he was, hand and foot with grave wrappings! Did he hop out? Did he float out? Where was he while his body lay decomposing in the tomb? What did he experience in the world of the spirits? Did he feel—did he know? How was his spirit united again with his body? **BUT WE ARE NOT INDULGED IN OUR IDLE CURIOSITIES!** As John so emphatically says—"these things are written that we might believe" (Jn. 20-30-31), not that we might theorize or theologize. How differently did the Holy Spirit inspired apostles record the gospel story than finite eloquence-minded and curiosity-minded man would have recorded it! The *brevity* of the gospel accounts testify to their God-breathed origin!

Not even any vividness in reporting the reaction of the crowds is indulged in! Surely they must have gasped, stared with mouths agape.

As we have stated before, the reaction of the Lord's enemies to this miracle establishes its authenticity. We cannot allegorize or spiritualize the account of this miracle and sidestep the implications of its attestation to His deity. The account of his miracle is plain and forthright enough in its claim to be a historical even that we must accept it as historical fact or reject it, the consequence being that Jesus and His disciples are the most demonical liars that ever lived.

The evidence was and is sufficient that rejection of this miracle cannot be intellectual. The only other reason for denial is moral! The Pharisees admitted the historicity of it, but denied it because they simply did not want to surrender to its implication—Jesus Christ, Divine Son of God, King and Commander of man's entire being—so men deny it today from the same motive.

Quiz

1. What does the mention of Lazarus' tomb being "cave" tell us about his financial status?
2. Why did Martha object to having the stone taken away from the opening of the tomb?
3. What is the primary purpose of mentioning of Lazarus being dead four days and his body beginning to decompose?
4. How does the reaction of the enemies of Jesus to this miracle help prove its historicity?
5. What does the prayer of Jesus teach concerning His relationship to the Father? Why did He pray at this time?
6. Is there any significance to the brevity of the account of this stupendous miracle?

7. If the evidence for the miracle is historically undeniable, why do men seek to explain away its historicity?

POLITICS AND MURDER

Text 11:47-57

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

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

49 But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto him, Ye know nothing at all,

50 nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

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

52 and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad.

53 So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but departed thence into the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he tarried with the disciples.

55 Now the passover of the Jews was at hand: and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, to purify themselves.

56 They sought therefore for Jesus, and spake one with another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?

57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him.

Queries

- a. What caused the excited concern of the council?
- b. How was Caiaphas a prophet?
- c. Why go up before the passover to purify themselves?

Paraphrase

Upon hearing of this stupendous miracle the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Council and began to say to one another excitedly, What's being done—what can we do about this

man—something must be done because he is doing many marvelous miracles. If we let him go on like this and do not stop him, he will gather such a tremendous following among all the people that the Romans, suspicious of sedition, will come and remove us from office for our incompetence, take away our temple and destroy us as a nation.

But one of the Council, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to those gathered, It is evident that none of you know what to do! None of you are smart enough to see what is going to have to be done. In view of the situation we must put to death some man as a political scapegoat in order to keep the Roman armies from coming and subduing our nation and killing many of our people. He made this statement not merely as a personal opinion but being high priest that year he made it as an official pronouncement that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the people in Palestine only but that by his death all the Jews scattered all over the world might be drawn into closer national unity. So from that day forward the Council made definite plans as to how they might put Jesus to death and make it appear to be a political necessity.

Jesus, knowing the murderous plotting of the Council, did not walk publicly and openly any more among the Jews. He left Bethany and went into the uninhabited country north of Jerusalem and entered into a village called Ephraim and there He rested with His disciples. Now the passover of the Jews was approaching and many pilgrims were going up to Jerusalem from all over the countryside in order to make the necessary preliminary purifications before the feast. The Jewish rulers, looking for Jesus among the crowds of the pilgrims, were saying to one another, What do you think—do you think he will stay away from the feast? The reason they were asking these questions was because the Council had issued an order that, if any person knew where Jesus of Nazareth was, they should tell the authorities that they might arrest Him.

Summary

The astounding miracle of raising Lazarus from the tomb has caused such furor and so great a following for Jesus that the Jewish rulers fear catastrophic political repercussions from Rome. The high priest resolves the solution by giving official pronouncement that Jesus must die as a political scapegoat.

Comment

The miracles of Jesus in and around Jerusalem since the Feast of Tabernacles (some three months previous) has caused a national crisis. There is frenzied confusion among the religious and political heads

of the nation. The ruling Council (comparable to our Congress) has been called into emergency session to declare war on the enemy—a meek, gentle, loving, compassionate spokesman for God. So many people have become enamored of the Galilean that the leaders fear for their positions and their national existence.

They were excited over the possibility of His popularity turning into a political revolt. Most of the Sadducees and some of the Pharisees were satisfied with the political status quo. That is, as long as the Romans allowed them to maintain their political and religious stranglehold on their own people they were satisfied. They endured the bitter occupation of their land by Roman soldiers and procurators as long as they themselves were allowed to control their religious customs for these were lucrative businesses. Furthermore, they knew well the history of their nation when it had rebelled against world empires. They were taken into captivity by Assyria and Babylon. Their ancestors during these rebellions had been scattered among foreign nations, their temple was destroyed and foreign peoples inhabited their beloved homeland. Jesus had openly claimed to be the Messiah, yet He made no political overtures. The great popularity He was now attracting coupled with His claims, might filter all the way to Rome and Caesar and then the Romans would do for them what Nebuchadnezzar had done for their ancestors. Can't you just see the council members wringing their hands in nervous anxiety?

But there is one evil schemer among them who has not let fear overcome his reason. He rudely insults the members, saying, "You are all bereft of any knowledge." The haughty one is none other than Caiaphas, present high priest, son-in-law to Annas, former high priest. Caiaphas was an opportunist who could be either uncompromising or compromising as the circumstances might dictate. He would not stop at bloodshed to serve his own ends. See these passages for clues to his personality (Matt. 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; Acts 4:6).

Caiaphas' statement in verse 50 is a very shrewd political, but cynically unscrupulous, solution to their problem. Actually, the high priest and his cohorts were not especially interested in either the temple, the nation, or the people except insofar as they must be concerned in order to protect their religious rackets. Jesus prophesied that the exact opposite would happen to the nation should they reject Him (cf. Luke 19:41-44; 21:10-28; Matt. 23:27-39). And it came to pass as it was prophesied by Jesus and as the Jews wished it to be when they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him, his blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27:25).

The traditional interpretation of verses 50-52 makes Caiaphas utter his scheme with full expression of his own free will and for evil purposes, but God also turned them into a prophecy concerning the atonement of Jesus for the Jews and for all nations. We quote Hendriksen, "Caiaphas was left entirely free, was not prevented in any way from saying what his wicked heart urged him to say. Nevertheless, God's will, without becoming even in the least degree defiled, so directed the choice of phraseology that the words which issue from the lips of this coldblooded murderer were exactly the ones that were needed to give expression to the most sublime and glorious truth regarding God's redemptive love. Without becoming aware of it, the villain had become the prophet!" Perhaps this is still the best interpretation. God could certainly cause unwilling subjects or unknowing subjects to become His mouthpieces (cf. Balaam, Numbers 22-24; Saul, I Sam. 19:20-24; the prophets of old who did not understand all they prophesied, I Pet. 1:10-12).

We believe (as our Paraphrase of these verses indicates) that another interpretation may possibly fit the context better. Caiaphas decided that in view of the situation, and secretly to serve his own personal ends, Jesus must be put to death as a political scapegoat. Why could not the phrase of verse 51 ("Now this he said not to himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation"), mean simply that he was making an official pronouncement? His statement was not merely a personal opinion as to what ought to be done—but it was in effect an order from the chief authority, the high priest, that Jesus is to be put to death. Notice the repeated reference to his position (vs. 49, 51). Verse 57 also shows that an official pronouncement had been published. Why does the word "prophesied" have to mean that it was divinely inspired? It does not always mean that. Perhaps he also told the council that by this political intrigue and machination they might further bring all the Jews of the dispersion, in other lands, under closer national unity and thus more under their control. "Perhaps" is all that we can offer—all interpretations of this passage hinge on the word "prophesied."

This sounded like an excellent solution to the crisis so the council voted the death penalty for Jesus and began definite plans to arrest Him as a subversive and kill Him for treason.

Verses 54-56 are all actions resulting from the public order issued by the Council for the arrest of Jesus in verse 57. From henceforth He became "public enemy number one," a fugitive from the authorities. Actually, Jesus was not a fugitive for He did not deliberately run

and hide from the authorities for His own personal safety. He retired to Ephraim for seclusion and privacy in order to rest up physically and strengthen both Himself and His disciples spiritually for the tremendously burdening events about to transpire. When the appointed hour set by the Father arrived, He faced the authorities and death with divine courage.

Ephraim was a village located probably northeast of Jerusalem about fourteen miles. After resting here a while, Jesus seems to have gone on a brief preaching tour "through the borders of Samaria, Galilee and Perea" (cf. Map #6, page 117A). Between verses 54 and 55 this tour takes place and in verse 55 the passover is probably only a week or two away. Jesus would be near Jericho and the pilgrims were flocking into the city to make sure they could be ceremonially purified before the passover arrived (cf. Ex. 10:10-15; Num. 9:9-14; II Chron. 30:17-18; Jn. 18:28). The Sanhedrin undoubtedly had their subordinates out searching among the crowds of pilgrims for the Galilean and His disciples. They nervously asked one another whether He would come to the feast or stay away.

Yes, He would come all right—in fact, He was probably already on the Jericho road. And, He would die for the nation and His death would ultimately gather together the scattered sheep, even sheep not of "this fold" (cf. Jn. 10:1-16). But His death would not fulfill the evil and covetous aspirations of Caiaphas and his cohorts.

Quiz

1. Why did the Council call an emergency session? What did they fear?
2. Why were the rulers interested in the temple and the people?
3. What is Caiaphas' solution? What did happen to the nation for killing Jesus?
4. Did Caiaphas become an unwilling prophet of God or did he merely make an authoritative pronouncement in verses 51-52?
5. Why did Jesus retire to Ephraim?
6. What did His death accomplish for the nation and those scattered abroad?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. ELEVEN

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

John 11:1-53

Introduction

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INCIDENT

- A. This miracle second only to Christ's own resurrection.
- B. It has played a significant role in leading many to belief in Christ.