

## I. John's final story to prove Jesus' deity

A. John 11:25-46 . . . Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" [27] She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world." [28] When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." [29] And when [Mary] heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him. [30] Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. [31] Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. [32] Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." [33] When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, [34] and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." [35] Jesus wept. [36] So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" [37] But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?" [38] So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. [39] Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" [41] So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. [42] "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." [43] When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." [44] The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." [45] Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what [Jesus] had done, believed in Him. [46] But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

B. We will talk about three things today: (1) The problem of not answering direct, personal questions. (2) Why does Jesus cry? (3) To see the glory of God you must believe in God and wait for God to act.

C. Pray

## II. Three points from John 11:25-46

A. The problem of not answering direct, personal questions

1. John 11:27 . . . Jesus asked Martha if she believed He was the resurrection and the life, and that whoever believed in Him would never die. She responded by saying, "Yes, Lord; I have believed (*past tense*) that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."
2. We certainly want to give Martha the credit she deserves for an insightful, theologically correct answer to Jesus' question. She had a good understanding of who Jesus was.
  - a. However, the essence of the question Jesus asked was, "Do you believe (*present tense*) what I just said?" And the most direct, honest answer would have been either "yes" or "no."
  - b. Now it is true that there are times when more information is needed before an answer can be given. In those situations, it is wise to ask for more information until you have enough to give a clear "yes" or "no" answer.
  - c. Sometimes, the "yes" or "no" answer needs an explanation or a qualification. In such cases, the "yes" or "no" can be followed with the additionally needed information.
  - d. And of course, there will be those rare times when it is unwise or the wrong time or the wrong place to answer a question, and in those times you can either say that you will not answer the question, or you will not answer it at this time or in this place.
3. Now you may be wondering why I am pointing out that Martha did not answer Jesus' question. Let me give you two reasons.
  - a. First, this is a common problem in the world, in the home, and also in the church. When asked a direct yet personally revealing or potentially incriminating question, people are prone to give an answer that has something to do with the question, but does not answer the question.
  - b. Second, in the case of Martha, it was Jesus who asked the question. In other words, Martha was not responding to just anyone, she was responding to the one she called Lord and acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of God.

4. Returning to the first reason I am pointing this out, I want to make it clear that even though this is a common problem, it does not mean people get up in the morning and make a decision to give non-answers to personal questions. It is my belief that most of us are not paying attention or even aware of the fact that the answer we've just given does not answer the question asked. However, we could be aware if we wanted to be. So why aren't we? Here are two possible reasons.
  - a. First, we are all self-protective. Some protect themselves by trusting God to take care of them – even when facing personal and potentially incriminating questions. Others protect themselves by using avoidance or deflection or excuses – which are all forms of answering direct, personal questions with answers that don't answer the question. To become honest with your answers, you must want to be honest and you must look to God as your source of security – just as David did when facing Goliath.
  - b. A second reason we are not aware that our answers do not answer the question is because we do not listen to ourselves. In fact, listening to ourselves is so uncommon that most people are not aware their answer doesn't answer the question. And they aren't aware they are becoming defensive, or resorting to anger, or being disrespectful, or using sarcasm, or turning the tables and attacking the one who asked the question.
  - c. So the first step in giving honest and direct answers to personal questions is to want to give honest and direct answers, and then to listen to your answers to see if they are honest and direct.
5. And this brings us to my second reason for pointing out that Martha did not answer Jesus' question. As with Martha, so with us – the problem of not answering direct, personal questions is not confined to the people around us, it effects our interaction with God as well.
  - a. The reality is, your honesty with others in the face of personal, potentially incriminating questions is a reflection of how direct and honest you are with God when He is addressing certain personal parts of your life.
  - b. And it is a reflection of how direct and honest you are with the Holy Scriptures when they addressing certain personal parts of your life.
  - c. And it is a reflection of how direct and honest you are with the convicting and teaching work of the Holy Spirit.
6. In other words, giving non-answers to direct, personal, potentially incriminating questions is not a small problem limited to certain

people and certain questions. It is a large problem – because it negatively effects your relationship with God, your interaction with God’s word, your openness to the Holy Spirit’s work within, and subsequently it negatively effects your spiritual growth. Therefore, if you are one who gives non-answers to direct, personal questions, I am urging you to remove this problem from your life and replace it with an honesty and openness that begins with God, and includes your dealings with the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, your family, the Body of Christ, and those who attend your church with you.

B. Why does Jesus cry?

1. John 11:33- 38 . . . When Jesus therefore saw [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping (*the Jews considered sharing in others’ sorrow a religious duty*), He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, [34] and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." [35] Jesus wept. [36] So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" [37] But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?" [38] So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb.
2. Upon reading this part of the story, we might be inclined to think that Jesus is being deeply moved, and that He proceeds to weep because He is identifying with and therefore feeling the pain of loss that those around Him are feeling.
  - a. And this would be Biblical, for Paul encourages such identification when he writes that we are to “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).
  - b. However, when we look a little closer we see that along with being deeply moved in His spirit and weeping, Jesus was also troubled, which adds the idea that Jesus was not mourning with the mourners, but because of the mourners – which included Martha and Mary.
3. As we know from earlier parts of this story, Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and they loved Him. Martha professed faith in Jesus as Lord, as Christ, and as the Son of God. When Mary saw Jesus, she fell to His feet in a sign of humble adoration – and maybe even submission.
  - a. Yet we also know that neither Martha, Mary, nor the crowd of mourners believed that Jesus was the resurrection and the life. And even though Jesus stated that Lazarus’ sickness would not

end in death (vs 4, 23-25), they were not convinced, that is, they did not believe that Jesus could defeat death and raise Lazarus from the dead, right then and there.

- b. In other words, Jesus was not weeping because someone He loved had died, or because everyone else was weeping over the loss of Lazarus.
    - (1) Jesus was weeping because they lacked the faith to trust Him to be the God in human flesh and the resurrection and life that He was. Yet He was not weeping for Himself, but because He knew what would befall them for their lack of faith.
    - (2) You see, their lack of faith was not just a theological problem, it was a life problem – for in whatever area we distrust God, we will turn from Him and His way and go our own, self-serving, self-centered, and therefore sinful way – and in so doing we will bring upon ourselves the troubles, suffering, and sorrow that results from such unbelief.
    - (3) In other words, Jesus was not mourning the loss of Lazarus, but rather their lack of faith which would only result in the loss of blessings and the increase of troubles that would come as a result of their unbelief.
  - c. We see this same kind of weeping over unbelief and the resulting troubles when Jesus approached Jerusalem, and upon seeing the city, said, “If you had known in this day the things which make for peace! But now (*because your unbelief has gone on for so long*) they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:41-44).
4. Why does Jesus cry?
    - a. We find no record in scripture that He cries for Himself because of how others are treating Him or rejecting Him. And surely He never cries as one who has no hope.
    - b. But He does weep for us and the high cost of unbelief that we needlessly and foolishly pay.
    - c. In this way, His tears are like a mother’s tears for her child who has made a bad, life-damaging choice and who now has to live with the results of that choice.
  5. May we be among those who bring joy to Jesus rather than tears.

C. To see the glory of God requires believing in God and waiting for God to act.

1. John 11:39-41 . . . Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" [41] So they removed the stone.
2. Martha's first response about Lazarus stinking is a clear show of unbelief in Jesus' ability to raise the dead. However, the removal of the stone from the opening of the grave is at least a submissive response to Jesus' request, and it could also be a tenuous, yet genuine response of faith in Jesus' ability to raise Lazarus.
3. That being said, what I want to focus on are Jesus' words to Martha, when He said, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"
4. For me, this raises two questions in relation to believing and seeing which I will try to answer.
  - a. First, why must we believe in God and in what God says to see the glory of God?
  - b. And second, why does it seem that most often we must patiently wait for God to act in order to see His glory?
5. We will start with the first question of why we must believe in God and in what God says in order to see the glory of God.
  - a. Almost everyone agrees that Hebrews 11 is the Bible's premier faith chapter, and in vs 6 we read, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He [exists] and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
  - b. In other words, you will not come to God if you do not believe God exists. And you will not live to please God if you don't believe He rewards those who seek Him – that is, who seek to know Him and to know what He is like and to know what He wants.
  - c. In the same way, if you do not believe in God, you will not look at creation and see God in it. If you do not believe in God, you will not see the love of God and the provision of God and the protection of God and the dependability of God and the wisdom of God in what He has done and continues to do.
  - d. And again, if you do not believe that God rewards those who seek Him, you will not intentionally, steadily, thoughtfully, and carefully live a life that honors and worships and respects and submits to and therefore seeks to please Him.

- e. The reality is, it is only when we believe in God, and believe that God is everything He says He is, and believe that God can do anything and everything, that we both will and are able to look at our world and see the glory of God whatever way it is being manifested and wherever it is being revealed.
  - f. We know from the end of this story (John 11:46) that some did not believe in spite of what took place in front of their eyes. And instead of seeing the glory of God, they – because of their unbelief – saw Jesus as a threat to the religious status quo, and so they reported what they saw to the Pharisees.
  - g. Therefore, faith is required to see God, to see God in action, and to see the glory of God as revealed by His actions. Where you lack faith, you will not see God as good nor His actions as beneficial, but rather as a threat to your well-being. To see the glory of God in the ups and downs of everyday life, you must believe in God and in what He says.
6. When we believe in God, why does it seem that most often we must patiently wait for God to act in order to see His glory?
- a. The answer to this question is simple though complex – God is not dealing with just one situation and one person at a time. Each situation and each person is part of a larger reality which includes a much greater number of situations and people.
  - b. In raising Lazarus, Jesus was dealing with His disciples, Martha, Mary, the Jews who had come to mourn with the family, the neighbors who would see or at least hear about the raising of Lazarus, and the religious leaders who would use this occasion to further their commitment to kill Jesus.
  - c. And Jesus was not just dealing with logistics or timing, but with the mind, heart, culture, religious beliefs, and community influences affecting each person involved.
  - d. In other words, raising Lazarus was not a small matter, but a rather large undertaking that included many more people than Lazarus and many more issues than bringing him back to life – which are just some of the reasons why we must patiently wait for God to act in order to see His glory.
- D. May we each recognize the importance of faith and patiently waiting in order to see the glory of God. May we, as individuals and as a group, pursue faith, build our faith, reinforce our faith, and help each other grow in faith so that we are able to see the glory of God in the affairs of everyday life, in whatever miracles take place, and in creation.