



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

John 11:1-10 Commentary New American Standard Bible

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 11:1) Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem, and Jesus was there often enough to know and love Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. As the Son of God, Jesus loved everyone and everyone who came to know Jesus knew that He loved them. Today, those who follow Jesus know that He loves them. Jesus makes everyone who believes in Him feel special because they truly ARE special to Him! They are one of His sheep! Mary and Martha must have concluded that Lazarus' illness was so serious that it could lead to his death, so they reached out to Jesus, who they knew loved them.

(John 11:2) It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

John will tell his readers more about Mary and her anointing the Lord with perfume in John 12:1-8, which we will discuss when we come to John 12:1-8. We do learn that Lazarus was Mary and Martha's brother. As John

proceeds with his account, we will learn why Mary showed her deep love and gratitude toward Jesus with this anointing and what it meant to Jesus.

(John 11:3) So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

The sisters knew Lazarus was ill and probably near death, so they sent a message to Jesus. They knew enough about Jesus (as we will learn as John’s account of this event unfolds) to call Him, “Lord.” They knew that Jesus had the love and the power to heal Lazarus when they identified Lazarus as “he whom you love.” They did not ask Jesus to do anything or tell Jesus what to do. Most probably, they knew Jesus well enough to know that they did not need to tell Jesus what to do. They believed He would do what was best and right at the right time, and He would heal their brother.

(John 11:4) But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

When Jesus received the message from the two sisters, He immediately said, “This illness does not lead to death,” for Jesus knew the eventual outcome of Lazarus’ illness. His illness would not end in death. Jesus knew Lazarus would die physically, but Lazarus would not die eternally. Lazarus would not die and be forever separated from the love of God and from those who love God. Because of his illness, Lazarus would die, but Jesus knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead so his illness would not end with his death and eternal separation from those he loved. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He knew that the living Lazarus and those who saw him raised from the dead would glorify God. Lazarus’ illness would lead some to believe, glorify, and honor Jesus as the Son of God, and by believing in Jesus they would receive the gift of eternal life too.

(John 11:5) Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

For good reason, John emphasized the love of Jesus for this family and their love for Jesus. Jesus did not act as He did from lack of love for them or because of their lack of love for Him. God is love. Jesus loves everyone.

Jesus loved those who came to Him (where John the Baptist had preached and baptized earlier) for Him to heal them and teach them, and He loved those who were still on their way to see Him, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to meet their Messiah. Remember: for similar loving reasons and to save lost Samaritans, Jesus once told His disciples that they needed to go to Galilee by going through Samaria (see John 4:1-45).

(John 11:6) So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

Since Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days when Jesus arrived in Bethany, Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead or too near death for Him to travel to Bethany in time for Him to heal Lazarus in person. Before anyone else knew Lazarus was ill, Jesus had known that Lazarus would become ill and die, and Jesus had planned to do more than heal Lazarus. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus intended to demonstrate personally what it meant for Him to be the resurrection and the life. He stayed two days longer to finish the work He was doing where He was, because He always did the Father's work according to the Father's timing in perfect agreement with the Father. He did not stay two days longer for lack of compassion for Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He knew they would grieve, but He also knew that upon His arrival their grief would soon turn to joy when He reunited them with their brother.

(John 11:7) Then after this He *said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

Jesus did not tell His disciples the Father's plans for them immediately after receiving the news that Lazarus was ill. Jesus waited two days before telling the disciples that they were going back to Judea. We can probably think of many good reasons for His waiting two days before telling them they were going back into harm's way. Surely, Jesus wanted them to focus on those coming to Him for help rather than focus on their fears. Jesus does not always give His followers much advance notice before telling them, "Follow Me!" or "Let us go!" As a matter of faith, Jesus perfectly did whatever His Father told Him when the Father wanted it done. And as a matter of faith, Jesus' followers try to do whatever Jesus tells them when

He tells them knowing the Holy Spirit will help them.

(John 11:8) The disciples *said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?”

Not knowing as much about Jesus as we do, for we know the rest of Jesus’ history in the Bible, Jesus’ disciples were understandably shocked and fearful when Jesus told them His plans. Jesus was their “Rabbi,” which means teacher, and they were His disciples, which means students, and they thought Jesus was going to lead all of them into unreasonable danger and possibly death. Thomas would even exclaim, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). Between their recent visit to Jerusalem in December and the soon to come Passover Feast where they were headed, four months had gone by, but Jesus’ dangerous escape from death (and theirs) was still foremost in their minds.

(John 11:9) 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.

Jesus knew when His final hour would come, and He tried to prepare His disciples for that eventual hour when He would die on the cross as the Savior of the world. Now, Jesus wanted to turn their attention away from their fears to the work of God before them. In Jesus’ day, the daylight hours were divided into twelve equal hours, so the length of an hour would vary according to the season of the year. Jesus meant that we need to do the work of God all day every day while we have the light of day, the light the sun gives to the world. Jesus also meant that as the true light of the world and as long as He was in the world with them that they needed to do the special work that His Father called them to do. If they followed Him, they would not stumble because He was and is the true light of the world. They needed to keep their focus on Jesus and on following Jesus to do God’s will, and if they did so, they would not stumble or “trip into sin”—perhaps the sin of not trusting Jesus to lead them rightly. Earlier, Jesus had promised them, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

(John 11:10) “But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

Jesus had told them earlier that some prefer to walk in the dark. In John 3:19, Jesus said, “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” Jesus was and is the light of the world. Because the light of God, the light of Jesus Christ, the truth of God in Christ, is not in some people (in those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior), they walk in the dark and they will stumble. Those who wanted to stone Jesus and who eventually applauded when He was nailed to the cross stumbled and sinned because they preferred to do evil rather than walk in the light by following Jesus. Later, Jesus preached the good news again to such people, saying “I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness” (John 12:46). Too many people prefer to remain in darkness rather than come to Jesus and believe in Him.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How did Mary and Martha describe Lazarus and his situation? What did they ask Jesus to do?
2. What did Jesus say Lazarus’ death would lead to?
3. Why do you think Jesus stayed two days longer instead of rushing to see Lazarus, Mary, and Martha?
4. How did the disciples feel when Jesus told them that they would be returning to Judea?
5. What did Jesus say about day and night?

© 2020 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. All Rights Reserved.

Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.

Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.