

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 11:32-24

v32: When Mary arrived and saw Jesus she fell on the ground at His feet and said, "Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died." Those are the very same words her sister had said to Him (v21). Like Martha, Mary was certain that Jesus would have healed Lazarus had He arrived before he died, but also like Martha, she expressed no hope that Jesus could now raise her brother back to life. **vs33-34:** Then Mary began to sob, as did her guests who had followed her. Surrounded by such sorrow, Jesus responded in a surprising way. John says He became angry, so angry that He may have groaned and His body trembled, and then He asked the mourners, "Where have you put him?" (literal), and they answered, "Sir (lord), come and see."

John 11:35-37

vs35-37: At that moment tears began to flow down Jesus' face. Some of the religious leaders who had followed Mary out of the house saw those tears and assumed that they came because of His great compassion for Lazarus. They said to one another, "See how He loved him!" (literal). But others among them reacted very differently. They accused Jesus of being heartless because He had allowed His friend to die. They asked, "Could not this man who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?" They still vividly remembered the miracle Jesus had performed only a few months earlier (Jn 9:1-7), and they questioned why He hadn't used that same power to rescue Lazarus. Their goal was to attack His character by suggesting that He was cold and loveless.

John 11:38-40

vs38-40: Their perpetual unbelief, in spite of all the miracles they had seen, and their unwavering hostility, even at a funeral, seems to have infuriated Jesus, and He groaned again while He was walking toward the tomb. The tomb was carved into the walls of a cave located somewhere near the village. Interestingly, John says there was a stone lying upon the opening to the cave, not in front of it, implying that the entrance was a hole in the ground with steps leading down into the cave. Jesus' command reinforces that image. He told the mourners to lift the stone off the grave, not roll it aside. That command alarmed Martha. The thought of having the grave opened and the stench of her brother's decaying body pour out into the crowd was more than she could bear. She warned Him, "Lord, he smells now, it's the fourth [day]!" (literal), to which Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (literal).

John 11:41-42

vs41-42: Then some men stepped forward to lift the stone off the opening to the cave, and as they did John says Jesus "lifted up His eyes" and started speaking to the Father. Loud enough so that everyone could hear Him, He said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me, and I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing around [Me] I said [this], so that they might believe that You sent Me" (literal). Before He performed this miracle He wanted everyone to understand that the power they were about to observe came from the Father; that He, Jesus, had been assigned to do what He was about to do, the Father had sent Him to that funeral; and He wanted people to understand that the Father always heard and answered His prayers. He said these things before raising Lazarus from the dead because afterward everyone would be in such shock they wouldn't remember a word He said.

John 11:43-44

vs43-44: John selects a very special word to describe Jesus' shout. It's a word that usually describes the roaring sound that is heard when a multitude of people are shouting all at once (Jn 12:13; 18:40; 19:6, 12, 15; Ac 22:23). So Jesus didn't speak to the open tomb; He bellowed out a command, "Lazarus, Here! Out!" (literal) (Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, Eerdmans, 1971, p.561). No explanation is given for this loud command, but Jesus appears to be calling to someone who's in another world. And that person, in another dimension of existence, heard His voice and obediently returned to his body. We are watching the fulfillment of a promise Jesus had made earlier. He had said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25). By raising Lazarus, Jesus was proving that someday all who believe in Him will hear that same voice call us into our resurrection bodies.

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John 11:43-46

vs43-44 (continued): John describes Lazarus' response this way: "The one who had died came out, feet and hands bound with bandages, and his face having been bound around with a cloth (the cloth probably went under his chin to keep his jaw from falling open) (A. Plummer, St. John, Cambridge, 1893, p.245). Then Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go!" (literal).

vs45-46: The miracle was so stunning that anyone with honest doubts about Jesus was instantly convinced. John says many of the religious leaders who saw it believed in Jesus, but then we see a strange refusal to believe grip others. He adds, "But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus had done" (literal). In other words they hurried back to Jerusalem, so they could report the incident to the authorities. The difference between those two responses is confusing. One person believed while another wanted Him arrested.

John 11:47

v47: The impact that this miracle had on the community can be seen by the reaction it produced among two very different groups: the chief priests and the Pharisees. Ordinarily the chief priests and the Pharisees were opponents. The chief priests were appointed by political leaders. Their focus was on running the temple and profiting from its activities. The Pharisees, however, were members of a religious movement whose goal was to insure that Jewish people obeyed the Bible so that nothing like the Exile ever happened again. They had identified 613 commands in the Law of Moses and wanted every rule to be observed, down to the smallest detail. They believed any act of disobedience provoked God to anger and endangered the nation's existence. But when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead He created a crisis that united both groups into a common cause. Both wanted to kill Him before His influence could spread any further.

John 11:47

v47 (continued): A special meeting was convened between the "high priests" and "the Pharisees." By "high priests" John probably means Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, along with a few other family members of temple officials. By "the Pharisees" he probably means the movement's most senior leaders. The purpose of the meeting was to determine what to do next. So far all their efforts to discredit Jesus had failed. They asked one another, "What are we doing that allows this man to do so many signs?" (paraphrase). And they had good reason to be frustrated. They had not been idle. They had worked hard to turn the crowds against Jesus. They had argued with Him (Mt 15:1-2); tried to trick Him into saying something politically dangerous (Mt 27:15-22); spread all sorts of slanderous accusations about His motives (Jn 11:37), His birth place (Jn 7:41-42), His lack of education (Jn 7:15) and His Sabbath-breaking (Jn 5:17; 9:16). They had announced to all who would listen that He was demon-possessed (Jn 8:48), insane (Jn 10:20) and a blasphemer (Jn 10:53). And they had threatened to expel from Judaism anyone who confessed that He was the Messiah (Jn 9:22). Yet His popularity was soaring, even among their own ranks.