

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 37

CHRIST RAISING LAZARUS

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Transcript

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John 11:1-10

Below is an Analysis of the first ten verses of John 11. 1. Lazarus and his sisters, verses 1, 2. 2. Their appeal to the Lord, verse 3. 3. God's design in Lazarus' sickness, verse 4. 4. The delay of love, verses 5, 6. 5. Christ testing His disciples, verse 7. 6. The disciples' trepidation, verse 8. 7. The Lord re-assuring the disciples, verses 9, 10. Before taking up the details of the passage which is to be before us a few words need to be said concerning the principle design and character of John 11 and 12. In the preceding chapters we have witnessed the increasing enmity of Christ's enemies, an enmity which culminated in His crucifixion. But before God suffered His beloved Son to be put to death, He gave a most blessed and unmistakable witness to His glory. "We have seen, all through John, that no power of Satan could hinder the manifestation of the Person of Christ. He met with incessant opposition and undying hatred, the result, however, being that glory succeeds glory in manifestation, and God was fully revealed in Jesus. That was His purpose, and who could hinder its accomplishment? 'Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?' Man's rage against Christ, only served as an occasion for the manifestation of His glory. Here in John 11 the Son of God is glorified, the glory of God answering to the rejection of the Person of Christ in the preceding chapters" (R. Evans: Notes & Meditations on John's Gospel). It is indeed a striking fact, and one to which we have not seen attention called, that the previous chapters show us Christ rejected in a threefold way, and then God answering by glorifying Christ in a threefold way. In verse 16 we read, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day": this was because of His works. In John 8:58 we are told, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am"; and immediately following, it is recorded, "Then took they up stones to cast at him"; this was because of His words. While in John 10:30 the Lord affirmed, "I and my Father are one," which is at once followed by, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him": this was on account of the claim which He had made concerning His person. The threefold witness which God caused to be borne to the glory of Christ in John 11 and 12 corresponds exactly with the threefold rejection above, though they are met in their inverse order. In John 10:31 it was Christ in His

absolute Deity, as God the Son, who was rejected. Here in John 11 His Divine glory shines forth most manifestly in the raising of Lazarus. In John 8 He was rejected because He declared "Before Abraham was, I am." There it was more in His Messianic character that He was despised. Corresponding to this, in John 12:12-15 we find Him in full Messianic glory entering Jerusalem as "King of Israel." In John 5 Christ is seen more in His mediatorial character, in incarnation as "the Son of man"—note verse 27. Corresponding to this we find in the third section of John 12 the Gentiles seeking the Lord Jesus, and to them He answered: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23)! Man had fully manifested himself. The Light had shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. The deep guilt of men had been demonstrated by their refusing the sent One from the Father, and their deadness in trespasses and sins had been evidenced by the absence of the slightest response to the eternal Word then tabernacling in their midst. They had seen and hated both Him and His Father (John 15:24). The end of Christ's public ministry was, therefore, well-nigh reached. But before He goes to the Cross, God gave a final testimony to the glory of His beloved. Beautiful is it to behold the Father so jealously guarding the honor of His Son in this threefold way ere He left the stage of public action. And solemn was it for Israel to be shown so plainly and so fully WHO it was they had rejected and were about to crucify. The darker the night, the more manifest the light which illumines it. The more the depravity and enmity of Israel were exhibited, the brighter the testimony which God caused to be borne to the glory of His Son. The end was almost reached, therefore did the Lord now perform His mightiest work of all—save only the laying down of His own life, which was the wonder of all wonders. Six miracles (or as John terms them, "signs") had already been wrought by Him, but at Bethany He does that which displayed His Divine power in a superlative way. Previously we have seen Him turning water into wine, healing the nobleman's son, restoring the impotent man, multiplying the loaves and fishes, walking on the sea, giving sight to the blind man; but here he raises the dead, yea, brings back to life one who had lain in the grave four days. Fitting climax was this, and most suitably is it the seventh "sign" in this Gospel. It is true that Christ had raised the dead before, but even here the climax is again to be seen. Mark records the raising of Jairus' daughter, but she had only just died. Luke tells of the raising of the widow's son of Nain, but he had not been buried. But here, in the case of Lazarus, not only had the dead man been placed in the sepulcher, but corruption had already begun to consume the body. Supremely true was it of the just One (Acts 3:14) that His path was as the shining light, which shone "more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). The same climactic order is to be seen in connection with the state of the natural man which John's "signs" typically portray. "They have no wine" (John 2:3), tells us that the sinner is a total stranger to Divine joy (Judg. 9:13). "Sick" (John 4:46), announces the condition of the sinner's soul, for sin is a disease which has robbed man of his original health. The "impotent man" (John 5:7), shows us that the poor sinner is "without strength" (Rom. 5:6), completely helpless, unable to do a thing to better his condition. The multitude without any food of their own (John 6:5), witnesses to the fact that man is destitute of that which imparts strength. The disciples on the storm-tossed sea (John 6:18), before the Savior came to them, pictures the dangerous position which the sinner occupies—already on the "broad road" which leadeth to destruction. The man blind from his birth (John 9:1), demonstrates the fact that the sinner is altogether incapable of perceiving either his own wretchedness and danger, or the One who alone can deliver him. But in John 11 we have that which is much more solemn and awful. Here we learn that the natural man is spiritually dead, "dead in trespasses and sins." Lower than this we cannot go. Anything more hopeless cannot be portrayed. In the presence of death, the wisest, the richest, the most mighty among men have to confess their utter helplessness. This, this is what is set before us in John 11. Most suitable background for Christ to display Himself as "the resurrection and the life." And most striking is this climax of the "signs" recorded in the fourth Gospel, displaying both the power of Christ and the condition of the natural man.

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha" (John 11:1). The object of our Lord's resurrection-power is first presented to our notice. His name was Lazarus. At once our minds revert back to Luke 16, where another "Lazarus" is seen. But how striking the contrast, a contrast most evidently designed by the Holy Spirit. There are only two mentioned in the New Testament which bear this name. Here again the 'law of comparison and contrast' helps us. The Lazarus of Luke 16 was a beggar, whereas everything goes to show that the Lazarus of John 11 (cf. John 12:2, 3) was a man of means. The Lazarus of Luke 16 was uncared for, for we read of how the dogs came and licked his sores; but the one in John 11 enjoyed the loving ministrations of his sisters. The Lazarus of Luke 16 was dependent upon the "crumbs" which fell from another's table; whereas in John 12, after his resurrection, the Lazarus of Bethany is seen at "the table" where the Lord Jesus was. The one in Luke 16 died and remained in the grave, the one in John 11 was brought again from the dead. The Holy Spirit has been careful to identify the Lazarus of John 11 as belonging to Bethany—a word that seems to have a double meaning: "House of Figs," and "House of Affliction." It was the "town" (more accurately "village") of Mary and her sister Martha. Though not mentioned previously by John, this is not the first reference to these sisters in the Gospel records. They are brought before us at the close of Luke 10, and what is there recorded about them sheds not a little light upon some of the details of John 11. Martha was evidently the senior, for we are told "Martha received him into her house" (Luke 10:38). This is most blessed. There were very few homes which were opened to the Lord Jesus. He was "despised and rejected of men." Men hid as it were their faces from Him and "esteemed him not." Not only was He unappreciated and unwelcome, but He was "hated." But here was one who had "received him," first into her heart, and then into her home. So far so good. Of her sister, it is said, "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word" (Luke 10:39). It is indeed striking to note that each time Mary is mentioned in the Gospel, she is seen at the feet of Christ. She had the deeper apprehension of the glory of His person. She was the one who enjoyed the most intimacy with Him. Her's was the keener spiritual discernment. We shall yet see how this is strongly confirmed in John 11 and 12. Next we are told, "But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me" (Luke 10:40). The word "cumbered" means "weighted down." She was burdened by her "much serving." Alas, how many there are like her among the Lord's people to-day. It is largely due to the over-emphasis which has been placed upon "Christian service"—much of which is, we fear, but the feverish energy of the flesh. It is not that service is wrong, but it becomes a snare and an evil if it be allowed to crowd out worship and the cultivation of one's own spiritual life: note the order in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Take heed unto thyself, and to thy teaching." "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). This is very solemn. The Lord did not commend Martha for her "much serving." Instead, He reproved her. He tells her she was distracted and worried because she had given her attention to "many things." She was attempting more than God had called her to do. This is very evident from the previous verse. Martha felt that her load was too heavy to carry alone, hence her "bid her therefore that she help me." Sure sign was this that she had run without being sent. When any Christian feels as Martha here felt, he may know that he has undertaken to do more than the Lord has appointed. "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). Though the Lord reproved Martha, He commended Mary. The "one thing needful" is "that good part" which Mary had chosen, and that is to receive from Christ. Mary sat at His feet "and heard his word." She was conscious of her deep need, and came to Him to be ministered unto. Later, we shall see how she ministered unto Christ, and ministered so as to receive His hearty commendation. But the great lesson for us here is, that we must first be ministered unto before we are qualified to minister unto others. We must be receivers,

before we can give out. The vessel must be filled, before it can overflow. The difference then between Martha and Mary is this: the one ministered unto Christ, the other received from Him, and of the latter He declared, she "hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." This brief examination of Luke 10, with the information it gives about the characters of the two sisters of Lazarus will enable us to understand the better their respective actions and words in John 11. "It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (John 11:2). This explains why Mary is mentioned first in the previous verse—the only time that she is. The commentators have indulged in a variety of conjectures, but the reason is very obvious. John's Gospel was written years after the first three, one evidence of which is supplied in the verses before us. The opening verse of our chapter clearly supposes that the reader is acquainted with the contents of the earlier Gospels. Bethany was "the town (village) of Mary and her sister Martha." This Luke 10:38 had already intimated. But in addition, both Matthew and Mark record how that Mary had "anointed" the Lord with her costly ointment in the house of Simon the leper who also resided in Bethany. It is true her name is not given either by Matthew or Mark,[1] but it is very clear that her name must have been known, for how else could the Lord's word have been carried out: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9). It is this which explains why Mary is mentioned first in John 11:1—she was the better known! It was at Bethany that Lazarus lived with his sisters. Bethany was but a village, yet had it been marked out in the eternal counsels of God as the place which was to witness the greatest and most public miraculous attestation of the Deity of Christ. "Let it be noted that the presence of God's elect children is the one thing which makes towns and countries famous in God's sight. The village of Martha and Mary is noticed, while Memphis and Thebes are not named in the New Testament. A cottage where there is grace, is more pleasant in God's sight than a palace where there is none." (Bishop Ryle). It was at Bethany there was to be given the final and most conclusive proof that He who was on the point of surrendering Himself to death and the grave was none other than the resurrection and the life. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem (John 11:18), the headquarters of Judaism, so that the news of the raising of Lazarus would soon be common knowledge throughout all Judea. "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3). This must not be regarded as a protest; it was not that Martha and Mary were complaining against Christ because He suffered one whom He loved to fall sick. Instead, it was simply an appeal to the heart of One in whom they had implicit confidence. The more closely this brief message from the sisters is scrutinized, the more will their becoming modesty be apparent. Instead of prescribing to Christ what should be done in their brother's case, they simply acquainted Him with his desperate condition. They did not request Him to hasten at once to Bethany, nor did they ask Him to heal their brother by a word from a distance, as once He had restored to health the nobleman's son (John 4). Instead, they left it for Him to decide what should be done. "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Each word in this touching message of Martha and Mary is worthy of separate consideration. "Lord" was the language of believers, for no unbeliever ever so addressed the despised Nazarene. "Lord" acknowledged His Deity, owned His authority, and expressed their humility. "Lord, behold": this is a word which arrests attention, focalizes interest, and expressed their earnestness. "He whom thou lovest." This is highly commendable. They did not say, "he who loves thee." Christ's fathomless love for us, and not our feeble love for Him, is what we ever need to keep steadily before our hearts. Our love varies; His knows no change. It is indeed striking to note the way in which the sisters refer to Lazarus. They did not blame him! They did not even say, "our brother," or "thy disciple," but simply "he whom thou lovest is sick." They knew that nothing is so quick in discernment as love; hence their appeal to the omniscient love of Christ. "He whom thou lovest is sick." There are two principle words in the Greek to

express sickness: the one referring to the disease itself, the other pointing to its effects—weakness, exhaustion. It is the latter that was used here. As applied to individual cases in the N.T. the word here used implies deathly-sick—note its force in Acts 9:37 and Philippians 2:26, 27. In John 5:3 and 7 it is rendered "impotent." It is not at all likely that Martha and Mary would have sent to Christ from such a distance had not their brother's life been in danger. The force, then, of their message was, "He whom thou lovest is sinking." The verse now before us plainly teaches that sickness in a believer is by no means incompatible with the Lord's love for such an one. There are some who teach that sickness in a saint is a sure evidence of the Lord's displeasure. The case of Lazarus ought forever to silence such an error. Even the chosen friends of Christ sicken and die. How utterly incompetent then are we to estimate God's love for us by our temporal condition or circumstances! "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them" (Ecclesiastes 9:1). What then is the practical lesson for us in this? Surely this: "Therefore judge nothing before the time" (1 Cor. 4:5). The Lord loves Christians as truly when they are sick as when they are well. It is blessed to mark how Martha and Mary acted in the hour of their need. They sought the Lord, and unburdened their hearts to Him. Do we always act thus? It is written, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1); yet, to our shame, how little we know Him as such. When the people murmured against Moses, we are told that, "he cried unto the Lord" (Ex. 15:25). When Hezekiah received the threatening letter from Rabshakeh, he "spread it before the Lord" (Isa. 37:14). When John the Baptist was beheaded his disciples "went and told Jesus" (Matthew 14:12). What examples for us! We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. No, He is full of compassion, for when on earth He, too, was "acquainted with grief." He sympathizes deeply with His suffering people, and invites them to pour out the anguish of their hearts before Him. What a blessed proof of this we find in John 20. When He met the tearful Mary on the morn of His resurrection, He asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" (John 20:15). Why ask here such a question? Did He not know the cause of her sorrowing? Certainly He did. Was it a reproach? We do not deem it such. Was it not rather because He wanted her to unburden her heart before Him! "Cast thy burden upon the Lord" is ever His word. This is what Martha and Mary were doing. The Lord grant that every tried and troubled reader of these lines may go and do likewise. The action of these sisters and the wording of their appeal afford us a striking example of how we should present our petitions to the Lord. Much of the present-day teaching on the subject of prayer is grossly dishonoring to God. The Most High is not our servant to be brought into subjection to our will. Prayer was never designed to place us on the Throne, but to bring us to our knees before it. It is not for the creature to dictate to the Creator. It's the happy privilege of the Christian to make known His requests with thanksgiving. But, "requests" are not commands. Petitioning is a very different matter from commanding. Yet we have heard men and women talk to God not only as if they were His equals, but as though they had the right to order Him about. Coming to the Throne of Grace with "boldness" does not mean with impious impudence. The Greek word signifies "freedom of speech." It means that we may tell out our hearts as God's children, never forgetting though, that He is our Father. The sisters of Lazarus acquainted the Lord with the desperate condition of their brother, appealed to His love, and then left the case in His hands, to be dealt with as He saw best. They were not so irreverent as to tell Him what to do. In this they have left all praying souls a worthy example which we do well to follow. "Commit thy way unto the Lord": that is our responsibility. "Trust also in him"; that is our happy privilege. "Trust also in him," not dictate to Him, and not demand from Him. People talk of "claiming" from God. But grace cannot be "claimed," and all is of grace. The very "throne" we approach is one of grace. How utterly incongruous then to talk of "claiming" anything from the Sitter on such a throne. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." But it must ever be kept in mind that He will "bring it to pass" in His own sovereign way and in His own appointed time. And oftentimes, usually so in fact, His way

and time will be different from ours. He brought it to pass for Martha and Mary, though not in the time and way they probably expected. The Apostle Paul longed to preach the Gospel in Rome, but how slow he was in realizing his desire and in what an altogether unlooked-for manner went he there! "When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God" (John 11:4). We take it that this was our Lord's answer to the messenger, rather than a private word to His disciples, though probably it was spoken in their hearing. And what a mysterious answer it was! How strangely worded! How cryptic! What did He mean? One thing was evident on its surface: Martha and Mary were given the assurance that both the sickness of Lazarus and its issue were perfectly known to Christ—how appropriately was the record of this reserved for John's Gospel; how perfectly in accord with the whole tenor of it! "This sickness is not unto death." This declaration is similar in kind to what was before us in John 9:3, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"—compare our comments thereon. The sickness of Lazarus was "not unto death" in the ordinary sense of the word, that is, unto abiding death—death would not be the final end of this "sickness." But why not have told the exercised sisters plainly that their brother would die, and that He would raise him from the dead? Ah! that is not God's way; He would keep faith in exercise, have patience developed, and so order things that we are constantly driven to our knees! The Lord said sufficient On this occasion to encourage hope in Martha and Mary, but not enough to make them leave off seeking God's help! Bishop Ryle has pointed out how that we encounter the same principle and difficulty in connection with much of unfulfilled prophecy: "There is sufficient for faith to rest upon and to enkindle hope, but sufficient also to make us cry unto God for light!" "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." What a word was this! How far, we wonder, had those two sisters entered into such a thought concerning the sickness of their brother. But now they were to learn that it was Divinely ordained, and from the sequel we are shown that Lazarus' sickness, his death, the absence of Christ from Bethany, and the blessed issue, were all arranged by Him who doeth all things well. Let us learn from this that God has a purpose in connection with every detail of our lives. Many are the scriptures which show this. The case of the man born blind provides a parallel to the sickness and death of Lazarus. When the disciples asked why he had been born blind, the Savior answered, "That the works of God should be manifest in him." This should teach us to look behind the outward sorrows and trials of life to the Divine purpose in sending them. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4). How this shows that the glory of God is one with the glory of the Son! The two are inseparable. This comes out plainly, again, if we compare John 2:11 with John 11:40. In the former we are told, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory." In the latter we find Him saying to Martha, as He was on the point of raising Lazarus, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." The same truth is taught once more in John 14:13, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." What then is the lesson for us? This: "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:23). "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5). Here the order of their names is reversed from what we have in verse 1. Martha is now mentioned first. Various conjectures have been made as to why this is. To us it appears the more natural to mention Mary first at the beginning of the narrative, for she would be the better known to the readers of the Gospel records. In John 11:5, and so afterwards, it was suitable to name Martha first, seeing that she was the senior. But in addition to this, may it not be the Holy Spirit's design to show us that each sister was equally dear to the Savior! It is true that Mary chose the better part, whilst Martha struggled with the needless unrest of her well-meaning mind. But though these sisters were of such widely dissimilar types, yet were they one in Christ! Diverse in disposition they might be, yet were they both loved with the same eternal, unchanging love! "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." A

precious thought will be lost here unless we mark carefully the exact place in the narrative that this statement occupies. It is recorded not at the beginning of the chapter, but immediately before what we read of in verse 6, where we are told that the Lord Jesus "abode two days still in the place where he was." Such a delay, under such circumstances, strikes us as strange. But, as we shall see, the delay only brought out the perfections of Christ—His absolute submission to the Father's will. In addition to that, it is beautiful to behold that His delay was also in full keeping with His love for Martha and Mary. Among other things, Christ designed to strengthen the faith of these sisters by suffering it to endure the bitterness of death, in order to heighten its subsequent joy. "His love wittingly delays that it may more gloriously console them after their sufferings" (Stier). Let us learn from this that when God makes us wait, it is the sign that He purposes to bless, but in His own way—usually a way so different from what we desire and expect. What a word is that in Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him!" "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:6). The Lord knows best at what time to relieve His suffering people. There was no coldness in His affection for those tried sisters (as the sequel clearly shows), but the right moment for Him to act had not then come. Things were allowed to become more grievous: the sick one died, and still the Master tarried. Things had to get worse at Bethany before He intervened. Ofttimes God brings man to the end of himself before He comes to his relief. There is much truth in the old proverb that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." Frequently is this the Lord's way; but how trying to flesh and blood! How often we ask, with the disciples, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" But how awful to question the tender compassion of such a One! And how foolish was the question of these disciples: how could they "perish" with Christ on board! What cause we have to hang our heads in shame! "When circumstances look dark, our hearts begin to question the love of the One who permits such to befall us. Oh, let me press upon you this important truth: the dealings of the Father's hand must ever be looked at in the light of the Father's heart. Grasp this. Never try to interpret love by its manifestations. How often our Father sends chastisement, sorrow, bereavement, pressure! How well He could take me out of it all—in a moment—He has the power, but He leaves me there. Oh, may He help us to rest patiently in Himself at such times, not trying to read His love by circumstances, but them, whatever they may be, through the love of His heart. This gives wondrous strength—knowing that loving heart, and not questioning the dealings of His hand" (C.H.M.). But why did Christ abide two days still in the same place where He was? To test the faith of the sisters, to develop their patience, to heighten their joy in the happy sequel. All true; but there was a much deeper reason than those. Christ had taken upon Him the form of a servant, and in perfect submission to the Father He awaits His orders from Him. Said He, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Most beautifully was this demonstrated here. Not even His love for Martha and Mary would move Him to act before the Father's time had come. Blessedly does this show us the anti-typical fulfillment of one detail in a most wondrous type found in Leviticus 2. The meal offering plainly foreshadowed the incarnate Son of God. It displays the perfections of His Divine-human person. Two things were rigidly excluded from this offering: "No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire" (Lev. 2:11). The leaven is the emblem of evil. "Honey" stands for the sweetness of natural affections, what men term "the milk of human kindness." And how strikingly this comes out here. How differently Christ acted from what you and I most probably would have done! If we had received a message that a loved one was desperately sick, would we not have hastened to his side without delay? And why would we? Because we sought God's glory? or because our natural affections impelled us? Ah! in this, as in everything, we behold the uniqueness of the

Lord Jesus. The Father's glory was ever dearest to the heart of the Son. Here then is the force of the "therefore." "When therefore he heard that he is sick, then indeed he remained in which he was place two days" (Bagster's Interlinear-literal translation). The "therefore" and the "indeed" look back to verse 4—"this sickness... is for the glory of God." And how what we read of in the intervening verse serves to emphasize this—Christ's love for His own never interfered with His dependence on the Father. His first recorded utterance exhibited the same principle: to Mary and Joseph He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The Father's claims were ever supreme. "Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again" (John 11:7). Notice the manner in which the Lord expressed Himself. He did not say, Let us go to Lazarus, or to Bethany. Why not? We believe the key to the Lord's thought here lies in the word "again": note the disciples' use of the same word in the following verse. The Lord was trying the disciples: "Let us go into Judea again." If we refer back to the closing verses of John 10 the force of this will be more evident. In John 10:39 we read that His enemies in Judea "sought again to take him." Judea, then, was now the place of opposition and danger. When, then, the Lord said, "Let us go into Judea again," it was obviously a word of testing. And how this illustrates a common principle in the Lord's way of dealing with us! It is not the smooth and easy-going path which He selects for us. When we are led by Him it is usually into the place of testing and trial, the place which the flesh ever shrinks from. "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" (John 11:8). The Greek is more definite and specific than the A.V. rendering here. What the disciples said was, "Master, the Jews just now sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" The attempt of His enemies to stone Christ was still present before the eyes of the disciples, though they had now been some little time at Bethabara. The disciples could see neither the need nor the prudence of such a step. How strange the Lord's ways seem to His shortsighted people; how incapable is our natural intelligence to understand them! And how this manifests the folly of believers being guided by what men term "common sense." How much all of us need to heed constantly that word, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6). God often leads His own into places which are puzzling and perplexing and where we are quite unable to perceive His purpose and object. How often are the servants of Christ today called upon to fill positions from which they naturally shrink, and which they would never have chosen for themselves. Let us ever remember that the One who is our Lord and Master knows infinitely better than we the best road for us to travel. "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world" (John 11:9). This verse has proved a puzzle to many, yet we believe its meaning can be definitely fixed. The first thing to bear in mind is that the Lord Jesus here was answering the timidity and unbelief of the disciples. They were apprehensive: to return to Judea, they supposed, was to invite certain death (cf. John 11:16). Christ's immediate design, then, was to rebuke their fears. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" That is, Has not the "day" a definitely allotted time? The span of the day is measured, and expires not before the number of hours by which it is measured have completed their course. The night comes not until the clock has ticked off each of the hours assigned to the day. The application of this well-known fact to the Lord's situation at that time is obvious. A work had been given Him to do by the Father (Luke 2:49), and that work He would finish (John 17:4), and it was impossible that His enemies should take His life before its completion. In John 10:39 we are told that His enemies "sought again to take him," but "he went forth out of their hand"—not simply "escaped" as in the A.V. What the Lord here assures His disciples, is, that His death could not take place before the time appointed by the Father. The Lord had expressly affirmed the same thing on a previous occasion: "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee." And what was His reply? This, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, and I do

cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected" (Luke 13:32)! "As a traveler has twelve hours for his day's journey, so also to Me there is a space of time appointed for My business" (Hess). What we have here in John 11:9 is parallel to His statement in John 9:4—"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day"—"must" because the Father had decreed that He should! This word of Christ to His disciples had more than a local significance: it enunciated a principle of general application. There is no need for us to enlarge upon it here, for we have already treated of it in our remarks upon John 7:30. God has allotted to each man a time to do his life's work, and no calamity, no so-called accident can shorten it. Can man make the sun set one hour earlier? Neither can he shorten by an hour his life's day. In the second part of the ninth verse the Lord announced another reason why it was impossible for men to shorten His life: "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." To walk in the day is to walk in the light of the sun, and such an one stumbleth not, for he is able to see the obstacles in his way and so circumvent them. Spiritually, this means, It is impossible that one should fall who is walking with God. To "walk in the day" signifies to walk in the presence of Him who is Light (1 John 1:5), to walk in communion with Him, to walk in obedience to His will. None such can stumble, for His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. It is beautiful to see the application of this to the Lord Jesus in the present instance. When He got word that Lazarus was sick, He did not start at once for Bethany. Instead, He tarried where He was till the Father's time for Him to go had come. He waited for the "light" to guide Him—a true Israelite watching for the moving of the Cloud! Christ ever walked in the full light of God's known will. How impossible then for Him to "stumble." "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:10). Very solemn and searching is this in its immediate application to the disciples. It was a warning against their refusing to accompany Him. Christ was the true Light, and if they continued not with Him they would be in the dark, and then "stumbling" was inevitable. The thought here is different from what we get at the close of John 9:4. There Christ speaks of a "night" in which no man could "work"; here of a "night" in which no believer should "walk." The great lesson for us in these two verses is this, No fear of danger (or unpleasant consequences) must deter us from doing our duty. If the will of God clearly points in a certain direction our responsibility is to move in that direction unhesitatingly, and we may go with the double assurance that no power of the Enemy can shorten our life till the Divinely appointed task is done, and that such light will be vouchsafed us that no difficulties in the way will make us "stumble." What shall we say to such a blessed assurance? What but the words of the apostle Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (verses 24, 25). The following questions are designed to help the interested student for our next lesson:— 1. Death is likened to "sleeping," verse 11: what thoughts are suggested by this figure? 2. Why did the disciples misunderstand Christ, verse 13? 3. Why was Christ "glad" for the disciples sake, verse 15? 4. What is signified by the "four days," verse 17? 5. Why are we told of the nearness of Jerusalem to Bethany, verse 18? 6. Why "resurrection" before "life" in verse 25? 7. What is the force of "shall never die," verse 26? ENDNOTES:

[1] It is characteristic of John to give us her name, for he presents Christ as God manifest in the flesh, therefore everything comes out into the light: cf. the fact that John alone tells us the name of the priest\

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