

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 10-11

A familiar sight at the time of Jesus was a sheepfold. Almost every green hill had a holding yard for sheep. They dotted the countryside all over Palestine.

The shepherd would bring his flock in at night to shelter the sheep from the elements and predators.

Sometimes the sheepfold was a cave. At other times the walled enclosure was made of mud or thorn bushes. Most often the tall walls around the sheep were piles of stone... The only way in or out of the sheepfold was a narrow passageway... And Jesus draws on this common scene from daily life in John 10.

Beginning in verse 1, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." To scale the wall, or dig out underneath, was unauthorized entrance. It was the tactic of a rustler.

"But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice..." It was common for several shepherds to use one fold. One pen corralled multiple flocks. A designated shepherd would spend the night in the doorway to protect the sheep from intruders.

And sheep have an acute hearing recognition. They remember the voice of their shepherd. In the morning all the shepherds had to do to separate their flocks was to sound out

their distinctive call. The sheep would then start sorting and moving toward their shepherd.

During World War 1 a band of Turkish soldiers stole some a flock of sheep from a Jerusalem hillside. The shepherd could never overtake the soldiers, but he wanted to retrieve his sheep. He shouted out his distinctive call, and despite the effort of the thieves, the sheep heard his voice and returned to their shepherd.

Sheep respond to the shepherd just as a Christian responds to the still small voice of the Spirit of Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 3, “**And he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.**” Harry Lorayne, author of “**The Memory Book**” was a famous memory expert.

Lorayne would amaze audiences by going into a crowd, and in a few minutes meet hundreds of people.

The folks would then be paraded back in front of him while he recalled each person’s name. It was amazing.

But Jesus puts the memory experts to shame! He knows billions of believers by name. *He even knows **your** name.* And his memory is fueled not by a clever technique, but by the deep love He has for each of us.

“**And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice...**” Remember the blind man in chapter 9. He’d never seen Jesus' face, but he recalled His voice.

Likewise, you and I have never seen Jesus face to face, but we’ve learned to recognize His voice. We’ve walked with Him, and we know how He speaks to us.

Sheep know their shepherd's voice.

I heard of New York fire. A blind, little girl was trapped on the fourth floor of her apartment building.

There wasn't enough room to use their ladders so the fireman stretched out a net and told her to jump. She couldn't see the net, and refused to budge.

But just in the nick of time, her father drove up to his burning apartment. He raced to the base of the building and shouted to his little girl to jump. And she did... *But it was only because she heard her father's voice.*

From time to time a Christian's faith demands that he or she take a leap of faith. Often we can't see into the future, but we hear our Father's voice and we jump.

“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” The only time sheep follow a stranger is when their sick. *And the same is true for a Christian.*

Verse 6, **“Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.”** One other attribute of sheep is they're not very bright. And again the disciples are acting like sheep - *dumb sheep.*

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door.” An ancient sheepfold had no doors or gates. The shepherd was its only door. His body was the barricade. Once the sheep were tucked in, the shepherd laid over the

threshold, and stayed between the sheep and potential danger.

He was saying, “You’ll harm these sheep, over my dead body.” And there’s only one entrance into God’s sheepfold, and that’s to come through Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, “If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Pastures in Palestine aren’t huge, flat grazing lands like you can find in Texas. Most of Israel - especially around Jerusalem - is rocky and mountainous. Tiny pockets of pasture lie in between steep slopes.

Ample supplies of grass are difficult to access. It takes a skilled, and caring, and experienced shepherd to find pasture for His flock... And likewise, we live in a barren world. Spiritual pasture is hard to come by, but our Good Shepherd knows our needs, and is able to satisfy His sheep, if we graze where He tells us.

Verse 10, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” And this is still Satan’s desire for you. Whenever you’re tempted to steer away from God’s will here’s the destination you’re headed.

On the other hand Jesus promises, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” The Greek term is “superabundance.”

There’s no limit to the blessings Jesus offers us.

Once, an old man was making his first drive over the Rocky Mountains. He was in a 1946 Ford. The steep grade took its

toll on the motor. It overheated forcing the man to stop several times. The trip was stressful.

He eventually made it over the mountains, but he did not enjoy the ride and had little interest in the scenery.

Recently the same man made another trip over the Rockies - this time in a brand new Ford 150 pick-up.

The motor purred like a kitten as it climbed the inclines and hugged the curves. This time there was no apprehension. The man's trip was fun. Several times he even stopped to admire the panoramic views.

Without Jesus, life is like the man's first trip.

In Christ, it's like his second.

The terrain doesn't change. Everyone's life is full of steep stretches and sharp curves, but with power under my hood you run better - you're less likely to overheat. The challenges remain, but when you're traveling with Jesus you can enjoy the journey.

Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep."

The hireling - or hired-hand - is only in it for a paycheck. He takes no ownership. He has no investment in the sheep. He lacks commitment, and as a result he splits at the first sign of hardship or danger.

Whereas, a shepherd loves his sheep - *they're his sheep*. Thus, he's willing to sacrifice for them. He's willing to put himself in harm's way to protect them.

The term "**pastor**" is Latin for "**shepherd**." And a good pastor is like a shepherd. He loves the sheep. They're his responsibility. He's willing to sacrifice for the sheep and even endanger himself to protect them.

He's accountable to Jesus for the state of the sheep.

Yet sadly, too many pastors are nothing but hired-hands. They work only for a paycheck, and when the going gets rough they bolt and abandon the sheep.

Some pastors started out wanting to be shepherds, but they were treated like hirelings for so long they now act the part. If a congregation wants a real shepherd they should let their pastor lead. They need to trust him and treat him like a shepherd - not like a hired-hand.

Jesus says it again in verse 14, "**I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.**"

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

The "**other sheep**" Jesus is referring to are the Gentiles (*you and me*) who'll eventually receive the Gospel and be "**one flock**" with the Jewish believers.

Jesus is the "**one shepherd**" of Jews and Gentiles.

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

Realize, the crucified Christ was not a victim. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who willingly and voluntarily sacrificed His life for the sheep. It's ironic, “Under the Old Covenant the sheep were sacrificed for the shepherd, while under the New Covenant it's the Shepherd who becomes a sacrifice for the sheep.”

Jesus, the Good Shepherd became the sacrifice who was *sheared* and *slain*, so His sheep could be saved.

Verse 19 sheds light on the discussions that followed the healing of the blind man in Chapter 9, “Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" Others said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

The miracle left the Jews divided over what to make of Jesus. They debated *was He of God or of Satan?*

Verse 22, “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter.” The “*Feast of Dedication*” goes by other names, “*Feast of Lights*” or “*Hanukkah*.” It occurs on the Jewish calendar in the month of Chislev - which parallels our December.

This is the feast that overlaps with the Christian celebration of Christmas. Hanukkah was **not** one of the seven feasts ordained by God in the OT. It was added later to commemorate the rededication of the Temple during the period between the testaments...

In 167 BC, the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes invaded the land of Israel, and on December 25 offered a pig on the altar in the Jewish Temple. This infuriated the Jews and prompted them to fight back. Over the next three years the family of the Maccabees led a guerrilla revolt against Antiochus and his troops.

They eventually drove out the invaders, and their idols, and on December 25, 164 BC, Judas Maccabeus entered the Temple and cleansed it of its defilement.

As part of the restoration Judas went to relight the Temple's Menorah, but he found only enough oil to burn for one day. Yet God worked a miracle. He caused the single day's portion to burn for eight days.

And to this day, the eight days of Hanukkah centers on the miraculous lighting of the ancient Menorah.

The rest of the dialogue in John 10 occurs during the Feast of Dedication - which took place about 2½ months after the healing of the blind man in Chapter 9.

Verse 23, "**And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.**" This was the long, roof-covered colonnade just south of the Temple's Holy Place.

Winter in Jerusalem is usually drizzly and cold. It was definitely time to pull out the thermal robes. I'm sure you know

what the Apostle John was wearing at the time? He had on his “long johns...” Solomon’s porch provided Jesus a little shelter from the elements.

“Then the Jews surrounded Him...” They literally, “hemmed Him in.” They cornered Jesus. “And said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt?”

In other words, stop beating around the bush, “If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” This was a silly assertion.

Back in 8:58 Jesus had said, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Rather than beating around the bush, He had claimed to be voice speaking from the burning bush.

Jesus hadn’t shied away from the question of who He was... He had boldly claimed that He is God.

Verse 25 “Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.” But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.” This verse reminds me of the Allstate insurance slogan, “You’re in good hands.”

You’re in good hands with Jesus! If Jesus has you in His grasp, no man can pluck you out. Jesus never gets stripped. Unlike Tom Brady with the Super Bowl on the line, Jesus never fumbles what’s in His hands.

Notice too, Jesus says, *"no one can snatch you out of MY HAND."* then He says, *"no one can snatch you out of MY FATHER'S HAND"* It's as if the *Jesus' hands* and the *Father's hands* are the same hands.

And they are. He leaves no doubt in verse 30. He utters, what was a shocker, *"I and My Father are one."*

The Jews wanted it straight - well, this is as straight and clear as it gets. The Father and the Son are two persons, but they are one substance. They are one.

The Bible reveals that there is one God who exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Throughout the OT God's plural nature was clearly taught. As far back as the creation God said, *"Let Us make man in Our image..."* The one true God had spoken of Himself with the use of plural pronouns.

Yet the Jews failed to recognize the Triune nature of God. They didn't grasp His Sonship. Thus, they said Jesus was guilty of blasphemy and deserving of death.

Thus in verse 31, *"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him."* This is the second time. *"Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' What have I done to deserve execution?"*

"The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'" The Jews were blind to the OT revelation that Messiah would be the "God-man." He would be fully divine and fully human.

This is why Jesus takes them back to the Scriptures, “Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ‘? He quotes Psalm 82:6...

He continues, “If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)...” Notice the parentheses. Obviously, Jesus' believed in the authority and reliability of the Bible.

He said, “*The Scripture cannot be broken...*”

Ignore it - attack it - deny it - try to refute it - but the Bible eventually *wears you down* or *wins you over*. It's said, “The Bible is an anvil that has broken many hammers.” But why beat on the Bible like an anvil? Why not use it as a foundation? Build on what can't be broken and it will last forever. The Bible is a solid rock.

But back to verse 35 - “If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

Realize, in the verse Jesus quoted, Psalm 82:1, God is rebuking Israel's judges. The next verse implies that, “How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?” In context, these judges are clearly human, yet they're called “gods” with a little “g” because they represented the one God, with the capital “G.” These men were gods only in the sense they stood in His place and issued His verdict.

Thus, Jesus is saying if the psalmist ascribed the term “gods” to wicked men, why is it wrong when the real “Son of God” uses the term to describe Himself?

Sadly, there're cults who twist 10:35 out of context to justify the deification of believers - *that humans can become gods in the same manner that God is God.*

This is a gross misinterpretation of the verse.

If you're a "god" in the Psalm 82-sense, or John 10:35-sense, then you're making yourself a wicked judge, and putting yourself in line for God's judgment.

In verse 37 He continues, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Jesus says don't just listen to *My words*, examine *My works*. He made claims the Jews saw as blasphemous, but had those claims not been validated by *His works*?

His works backed up *His words* and proved He was God. Yet verse 39 "Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed." A site near the Dead Sea that we always visit on our tours...

Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." And many believed in Him there."

Apparently, the location reminded the people of John, and his testimony of Jesus. Now that they could see that what John said had come true, they believed.

Jesus has just challenged His critics to examine *His words* by **His works**. In chapter 11 Jesus does one of His greatest works... “A certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.”

Bethany was a suburb of Jerusalem. It's on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. (*far right on the map*) Pilgrims passed through going up to Jerusalem.

And “It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.” John identifies this Mary with an event of which he hasn't yet written. But he will, in 12:1-8, he'll recount her extravagant act of worship.

His point here is that it's the same Mary.

“Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” Evidently, Jesus had a special affinity for Lazarus. They were friends.

They didn't say, “he who loves you,” though I'm sure Lazarus did - but the women say, “*he whom you love.*”

The real distinctive trait about a Christian is not that he loves God, who wouldn't love God when God is so lovable! *The amazing thing is that God loves us!*

“When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” This was also what Jesus said of the man born blind. Jesus doesn't cause suffering, but He uses tragedies to showcase His glory.

“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”

Wait a minute! Is this any way to show someone you love them? They're sick, and it's within your power to do something about it, yet you drag your feet?

Realize, human love and God's love act differently. Human love coddles. It rushes in to alleviate any twinge of suffering. Yet God's love is more powerful. It turns ashes into beauty. Thus, His love is able to wait.

God's love is not a **pampering love**, but a **perfecting love**. He doesn't shelter us. He forces us to face life head on. *Faith doesn't get stretched without tension. Character isn't forged except through struggle. Courage doesn't grow apart from challenge. Conviction doesn't crystallize unless there's pressure.* Jesus has lessons to teach those He loves. This is why He waits.

“Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" The disciples were afraid for Jesus' life.

“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. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." As long as you walk in God's light you can't stumble. Jesus isn't afraid. His time had not yet come. It's God's will He go to Bethany, so God will guard Him.

Verse 11, “These things He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” They figured Lazarus was just ill. He could sleep it off. Get some rest and he’ll be fine.

“However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.”

Again the disciples were on a different frequency. Jesus was speaking figuratively. They thought literally.

“Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.”

Sleep is a familiar idiom for death - in both the Bible and in secular literature... Jesus used this idiom once before. When He entered Jairus' house, He told the mourners, “The girl is not dead, but sleeping.”

Of course, the Jews laughed. The girl had no pulse, her body was cold and blue, her eyes had rolled back in her head. “*What do you mean she's just sleeping?*”

Jesus wasn't debating the autopsy. *He anticipated a miracle!* He knew the girl's condition was temporary.

Sleep is a fitting analogy for death. In sleep, our body slows down, while our mind remains active. And in death, our body stops, but our spirit lives on.

In a sense, death is as temporary as sleep. As the poet puts it, “Sleep is but a short death; death is but a longer sleep.” There resurrection will be a “last wake-up call.” There everybody will awake to a new body - either fit for eternal life or fit for eternal punishment.

Sleep was a popular analogy for death among early Christians. Believers referred to their burial sites as "resting-houses." Our English word "*cemetery*" means "sleeping place." Death is not final. It's simply, "the foyer of eternity." The grave has a door on the inner side. *Jesus uses this occasion to prove this point...*

Verse 15 "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him. Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." This was "*Doubting Thomas*" living up to his nickname. Certainly, Thomas was devoted to Jesus. *He's ready to die for Jesus.* He's a sailor willing to go down with the ship. **He just doesn't have much faith.**

Did you hear about the optimist who took the pessimist duck hunting? He really wanted to show off his new hound dog. The pessimist took one look at the dog and frowned, "*Looks like a mutt to me.*"

Pretty soon a flock of geese flew over head. Bam, bam - two fell in the middle of the lake. The dog ran out on top of the water, picked up both ducks in his mouth, and ran back across the surface of the lake.

The optimist stuck out his chest and asked his friend, "*Now, what do you think of my dog?*" The pessimist said, "*Your dumb dog doesn't even know how to swim.*"

That was negative Thomas. His cup was always half empty, rather than half full. Its interesting Thomas is also called, "*The*

Twin." Apparently, he had a twin sibling... **And he or she is probably here tonight!**

Are you a negative person? Do you wake up and greet the day, "Good Lord, its morning" or "Good morning, Lord"? Realize when you travel with Jesus there's always a bright side. *Don't be a doubter.*

Verse 17 **"So when Jesus came, He found that (Lazarus) had already been in the tomb four days."**

Jesus had been in Bethabara - east of the Jordan River - twenty miles away. It took Martha's messenger a day to reach Him. Once He got the message, Jesus waited two days. It took a day to walk back to Bethany.

This all means that Lazarus had died shortly after the messenger departed. When he got back, Jesus' message, **"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"** seemed like an empty promise. Lazarus wasn't just sick - now he was dead as a doorknob.

"Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house." Mary was the more emotional sister. She was still mourning... Martha met Jesus.

"Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." She accuses Him of a missed opportunity... Martha had a strong faith! She had no doubt, if

Jesus had come in time He could've saved her brother's life, but He'd delayed.

Martha is about to learn Jesus never misses an opportunity - He just has His own timetable.

Martha's faith was *strong* but it was *struggling*. She wants to believe Jesus can still perform a miracle, but this is no longer a mere illness - a feeble fever. The King of Death has choked the life out of her brother.

Martha believes in healing. She's seen Jesus handle fevers before, but is her faith *big enough, brave enough, bold enough* to tackle the Grim Reaper?

She says to Jesus, "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha is still struggling. She trusts in **the doctrine of resurrection**. She has correct theology. Our bodies will live again.

But "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." In the Greek verse 26 is a double negative.

It literally reads, "shall never, never die." Jesus is asking Martha, "Do you (really) believe this?"

Martha believed a doctrine, but does she believe in Jesus? She makes a statement of faith in verse 24, *but real faith is more than words!* **You can believe in the right doctrines and**

quote the correct creeds. But when was the last time the power behind the doctrine jumped off the page and got a hold of your mind, heart, hands.

Like Martha, you believe in *the resurrection... one day... yet future*. But right now do you believe Jesus will resurrect a dead joy, or a dead dream, or a dead marriage, or a dead ministry? You believe that Jesus created the heavens and earth, but what about His creative power in the hopeless situation you face?

When Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life,"* He took a truth off the page, and put it in a person. He takes truth out of the realm of doctrine and into the realm of relationship. He moves it out of the future, and into the present. Real faith is more than a matter-of-fact statement - its reliance on a person... Jesus asks Martha, and He asks us, *"Do you (really) believe this?"*

"She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." Martha tries to sidestep the real question.

"And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.

Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to

weep there.” Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Mary echoes Martha's greeting. Her faith is in the same shape.

“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. The expression means "a deep seated anger." More than distressed, Jesus was mad.

“And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept.” Verse 35 records a monumental moment - **the day God cried.**

But why did He cry? There were various theories...

“Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Some folks figured he was grieving for a lost loved one. Others thought He was upset He'd arrived too late. *To me, none of the theories fit the facts...*

I believe Jesus cried, not because of what death did to do to the person *inside* the tomb, but because of what it had done to His followers *outside* the tomb.

They had let the Grim Reaper waltz right into their lives and strip them of everything they held precious. They allowed a vile, enemy rip off their joy and faith. They had handed over their hope and happiness without even a struggle. It was a pathetic scene. *Enough to make you cry... Enough to make God cry...*

Verse 38 “Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” I like the OKJV here. Martha says, “Lord, by this time he stinketh...” Lazarus smelled like leftovers that had sat too long in the refrigerator.

Superstitious Jews believed a dead person’s spirit hovered over its body three days - but once the body deteriorated to a certain point it gave up any hope of returning. If anyone at Lazarus' tomb had embraced this notion, by the fourth day all hope was abandoned.

Verse 40 “Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.” Can you imagine what it would’ve been like to witness this event. *To be there!*

And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”

And it’s been pointed out that if Jesus hadn’t specified, “*Lazarus*” - every corpse in every graveyard in the world would've come bounding from their tomb.

Realize, this was Lazarus' first funeral, but it would not be his last. He was resurrected to die again. But in light of what happened this day, I'm sure his second funeral was much different. No one present for Jesus' miracle, would ever see death quite the same.

No longer did they see it as *final*, but as *transitional*. No longer a *burial*, but a *birth*. No longer a *loss*, but a *promotion*... On this day, Jesus took the fear out of death. It became a reason for *gladness not sadness*.

Verse 44 “**And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.**” Notice, Lazarus was alive, but bound. He had new life, but still wore grave clothes.

And this is the predicament of every believer. We're resurrected spiritually. We're a recipient of new life, but the attitudes, and habits, and thought patterns of the past remain. We're alive but still wearing grave clothes.

And notice, though Jesus gave Lazarus new life, He didn't free him from his shroud. *That wasn't Jesus' job.*

Jesus assigns that responsibility to Lazarus' friends. “**Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."**”

Today, it's the church's job to help a new believer shake free from bondage. Our role is to help him or her to see themselves in Christ, and shed their sinful habits, and renew their mind. We need to help our fellow believers swap *grave clothes* for **grace clothes**.

Verse 45, “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.”

I love Peterson’s paraphrase of the Pharisees. “What do we do now? This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs.” Just about the time the *jealous Jews* had discredited one miracle, Jesus worked another. Damage control was getting more difficult.

And notice the term used for Jesus’ miracles, “**God-signs.**” This is why Jesus worked miracles - to prove He was God... Everyone Jesus healed succumb to illness later. Everyone He raised from the dead, died a second time. His miracles weren’t intended to alleviate all suffering - or end the funeral business... Even today, His miracles have a message. They’re “**God-signs.**” *His power reveals His person and promises.*

Verse 48 the priests continue to plot. “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” Here’s why the Jews hated Jesus. He was a threat to *their power, their profits, and their position.*

The Jewish aristocracy had an arrangement with the Romans. You scratch our back and we’ll scratch yours. The Jews cooperated with Rome, while Rome propped up the Jews. Jesus was upsetting the status quo.

“And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” Caiaphas’ words were an accidental prophecy.

John writes, “Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.”

Caiaphas was a wicked man *pronouncing a death sentence*, but God *used* the High Priest to *prophesy our salvation*. It’s ironic. the Jews put Jesus to death to save their own skin, in reality He saved the world.

“Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews (He knew their plans), but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think - that He will not come to the feast?” Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.” It seems the chief priests had gone so far as to put a bounty on Jesus’ head. *It’s sad that one of His own disciples would be the person to collect...*

And that is what we'll study in next week's chapters.