

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 13,

John 11:1-57

6-Min. Video Overview

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

So, let's talk about one of the most intense and honestly paradoxical stories in the entire Gospel of John. It's the story of Lazarus. It's a moment so powerful that it became the ultimate sign of life.

And at the exact same time, it signed Jesus' death warrant. Let's get into how this all went down. I mean, we are talking about the absolute peak of Jesus' miracles here.

He brings a man back from the dead. Not just kind of dead, but dead and in a tomb for four days. It's a staggering display of power over death itself.

And here is the twist. You'd think an incredible act of life like this would unite everybody in awe, right? Well, nope. Instead, it just makes his enemies dig in their heels and directly triggers the official plot to have him killed.

So how on earth does a miracle of life lead directly to a plot for death? Okay, to really get the stakes here, you have to understand where Jesus was at this point. He wasn't just on some peaceful teaching tour. He had literally just fled Jerusalem to escape what was basically a lynch mob, and he was hiding out on the other side of the Jordan River.

So when he gets the summons to go help his sick friend, Lazarus, it means he has to go right back to Judea, the absolute epicenter of all that danger. The tension there was at a fever pitch. This isn't just a casual trip.

It's a life-or-death decision, plain and simple. And his own disciples? They are completely baffled. You can just hear the panic in their voices here.

Rabbi, they were just trying to stone you to death, and you want to go back? To them, this is a straight-up suicide mission, and you can't really blame them for thinking that. And this part just perfectly captures the mood. Thomas, the one we always call the doubter, shows this incredible, grim loyalty.

He doesn't say, great, let's go see a miracle. No, he says to the others, let us also go, that we may die with him. He is fully expecting this to be a one-way trip.

And then, just when you think it can't get any more tense, the story takes another really strange turn. Jesus gets the news that his dear friend is sick, but he doesn't rush over. He waits.

Just look at this contradiction. On one hand, he says this sickness won't end in death. But then what does he do? He intentionally hangs back for two more days.

It's a really confusing move, right? Almost feels a little cold. But trust me, there's a very specific reason for it. So why the wait? Well, it was totally intentional.

Jesus is deliberately allowing Lazarus to die. He's not just planning a healing here. He's setting the stage for something so much bigger, so much more dramatic, that no one could possibly deny it.

So when Jesus finally arrives in the village of Bethany, the mood is just heavy with loss. Any hope for a last-minute miracle is long gone. All that's left is the raw, painful reality of grief.

And both sisters, Martha and Mary, greet him with the exact same heartbreaking sentence. It's a fascinating line, because it's full of faith. They believe he had the power to stop death.

But it's also dripping with regret. It's like they're saying, "We believe in you, but you're too late. And this is where we get to the heart of the matter.

Martha expresses the standard belief of the time. Yeah, resurrection is a real thing, but it's an event that's going to happen way, way down the road at the end of time. And then Jesus just drops this bombshell.

He makes one of the most radical claims ever, saying that resurrection isn't an event. It's a person. It's him, right here, right now.

You know, in the middle of all this epic theological talk, we get this incredibly human moment. Seeing his friends completely broken by grief, the text says he was deeply moved and troubled. And then in the shortest verse in the whole Bible, it just says, Jesus wept.

He was right there with them in their pain. So you've got the danger, the strange delay, the raw grief. It's all been a pressure cooker building up to this one, single, climactic moment at the tomb of Lazarus.

And the scene at the tomb, oh man, you could cut the tension with a knife. Jesus commands them to move the stone. Martha, ever the practical one, objects immediately.

She's like, whoa, hold on. He's been in there for four days. There's going to be a bad odor.

Now that detail isn't just for shock value. It is definitive proof. This isn't a coma.

This is decomposition. This is death. Then, after a prayer said out loud for everyone to hear, he shouts the impossible.

Lazarus, come out. Now you have to understand, in the way the Gospel of John is structured, this isn't just another cool miracle. This is the big one.

It's presented as the seventh and final sign before his own death and resurrection. It is the grand finale, the ultimate proof of who he is and what he came to do. So a man comes back from the dead after four days.

End of story. Everyone believes. Happy ending.

Right? Ha. Not even close. This is where the story's central paradox just explodes onto the scene.

The reaction was just night and day. On one side, you have many of the people who actually saw it happen. For them, the proof was undeniable.

And they believed. But for the religious authorities? They didn't see a miracle. They saw a five-alarm fire that had to be put out immediately.

And let's be clear, their fear wasn't about theology. This was about cold, hard politics. They're thinking, okay, this guy is getting way too popular.

Soon, everyone is going to believe in him. That could lead to an uprising, and if that happens, the Romans will come down here and destroy everything. Our temple.

Our nation. Our power. So the high priest, a guy named Caiaphas, he stands up and lays it all out with this chillingly practical logic.

He basically says, look, you guys are missing the point. The math is simple here. It is better for one man to die than for our entire nation to be wiped out.

It's a cold-blooded political strategy to solve their Jesus problem. But the writer of the gospel, John, points out this incredible layer of irony. Caiaphas thinks he's just making a clever political calculation to save his own skin.

But in doing so, he accidentally speaks this profound theological truth about the purpose of Jesus' death. So you can see the dominoes falling, one right after the other. The miracle happens.

Word gets out to the Pharisees. The council meets. The decision is made.

The text is crystal clear. It says, from that day on, this specific miracle, this undeniable act of life, is what officially kicked off the plot to have Jesus executed. And that leaves us right back where we started, with the central, mind-bending question of this whole story.

How does the greatest possible sign of life become the very thing that seals a death warrant? It's a question about what happens when divine power collides head-on with human fear and political ambition, a paradox that sits at the absolute heart of this story.