

GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

11



CHRYSOSTOM

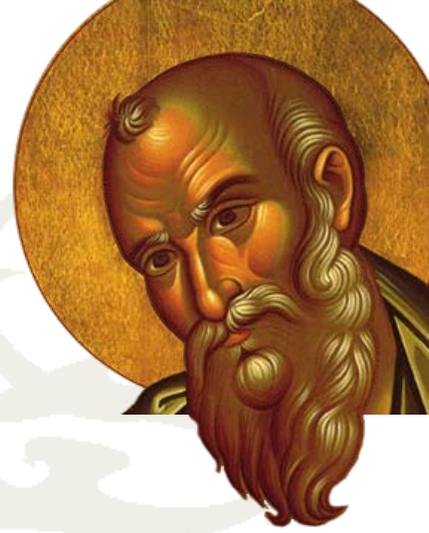
Read St. John Chrysostom's homilies on John chapter 11.



PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of John chapter 11.

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Chapter eleven begins with the sickness and death of St. Lazarus, the brother of Ss. Martha and Mary. Jesus said two interesting things about this. First, this sickness was “not unto death” (11:4), meaning, as Blessed Theophylact says, “This sickness was not in fact unto the final death most men undergo.” Secondly, Lazarus’ death would glorify the Son of God because, St. Cyril of Jerusalem reminds us, “Jesus foresaw the wonderful conclusion to Lazarus’ illness,” namely, Lazarus’ resurrection (11:11). The disciples then twice demonstrated their continuing lack of full belief in Christ. First,

they were afraid to return to Judea because of the possibility of being killed there (11:8, 16); Jesus reminds them that they walk in daylight—an allusion to His being the Light of the world (8:12)—and therefore should not fear (11:9-10). Secondly, they thought Jesus’ reference to Lazarus being asleep meant he was merely resting, while Jesus meant Lazarus was dead (11:12-14); their

misunderstanding showed that they did not fully trust Christ’s supernatural power (11:15).

When Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany Lazarus had already been entombed for four days (11:17). St. Martha believed that Jesus could have prevented Lazarus’ death (11:21)—as did her sister (11:32)—and even believed that her brother would be resurrected at the last day (11:24), but Jesus responded that He is “the resurrection and the life” Who has the power to both give life to the dead and eternal life to those who believe in Him (11:25). Blessed Theophylact restates Christ’s response like this: “If I have power to save you from what is more terrible—spiritual death—surely I can easily save your brother from what is less terrible—physical death.”

Jesus “groaned in the spirit and was troubled” as he encountered the distraught mourners (11:33). What does this mean? St. John Chrysostom says St. John the Theologian wrote this “so that you may learn that (Christ) had truly put on our nature.” At the same time, while Jesus’ human nature grieved (and, some writers say, trembled at His upcoming Passion), by the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus also rebuked His flesh to restrain its grieving. Blessed Theophylact explains that Christ engaged in such restrained grieving “to teach us to avoid the extremes of callousness on the one hand, and of unbridled grief on the other.”

Jesus then resurrected Lazarus (11:38-44). His prayer reminds us that this is an action of the unified will of God the Father and God the Son (11:41-

42); as St. John Chrysostom puts it, “If I had been an enemy of God, what is done would not have succeeded.” The troparion for Lazarus Saturday proclaims the main message of this event: “In confirming the common Resurrection, O Christ God, Thou didst raise up Lazarus from the dead before Thy Passion. Wherefore, we also, like the children, bearing the symbols of victory, cry to Thee, the Vanquisher of death: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.”

The chapter ends with the Sanhedrin plotting to kill Jesus. Interestingly, Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation (and ultimately people around the world) (11:51-52).



LIFE TIP

It truly saddens us when someone we love reposes, but St. Cyril of Alexandria reminds us that it will turn out well: “The display of grace (of resurrection) has been reserved until the appointed time. This grace is powerful, not partially but effectually, in the case of all, even in the case of those saints who have died in time past and are tasting death for a short time until the general resurrection. For then, together, all will enjoy the good things.”

