

RELEARNING ANCIENT BIBLE STORIES IN A BRAND-NEW WAY

EPIC TALES

TOO



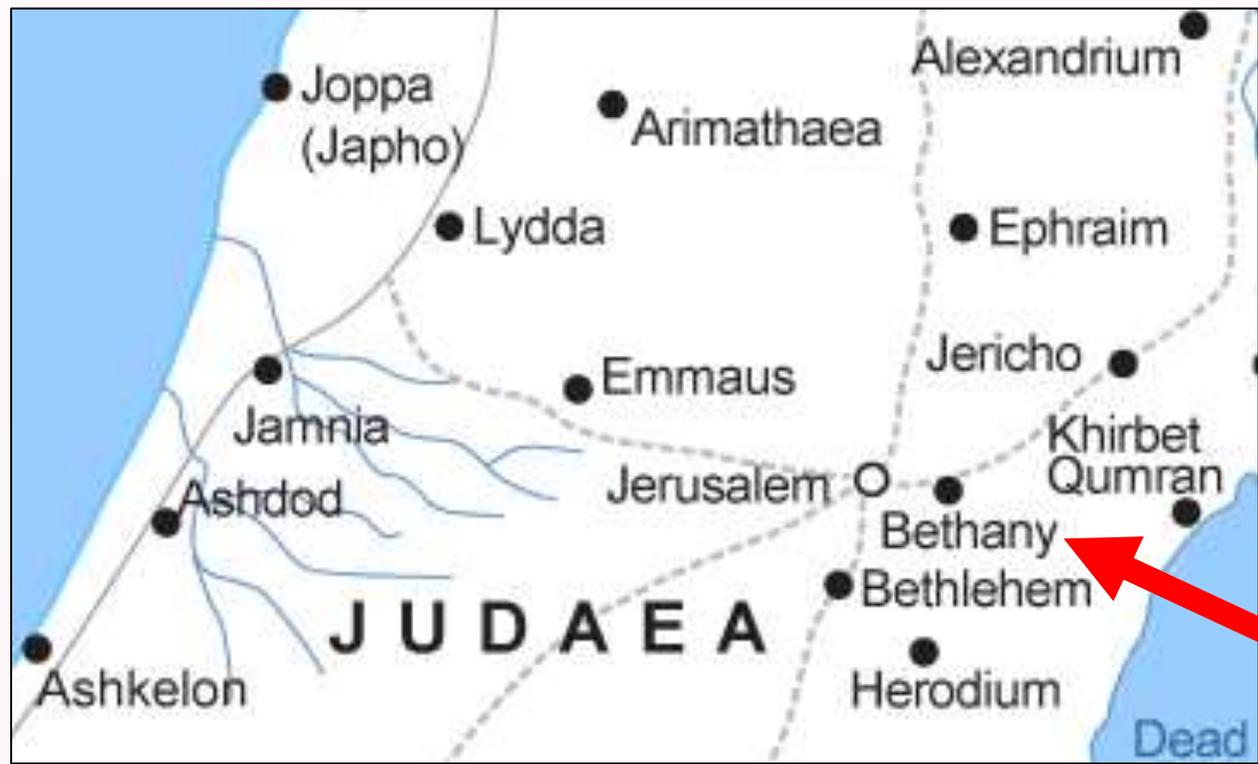
Jesus & Lazarus

John 11



Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany the village of Mary and her sister Martha. John 11:1

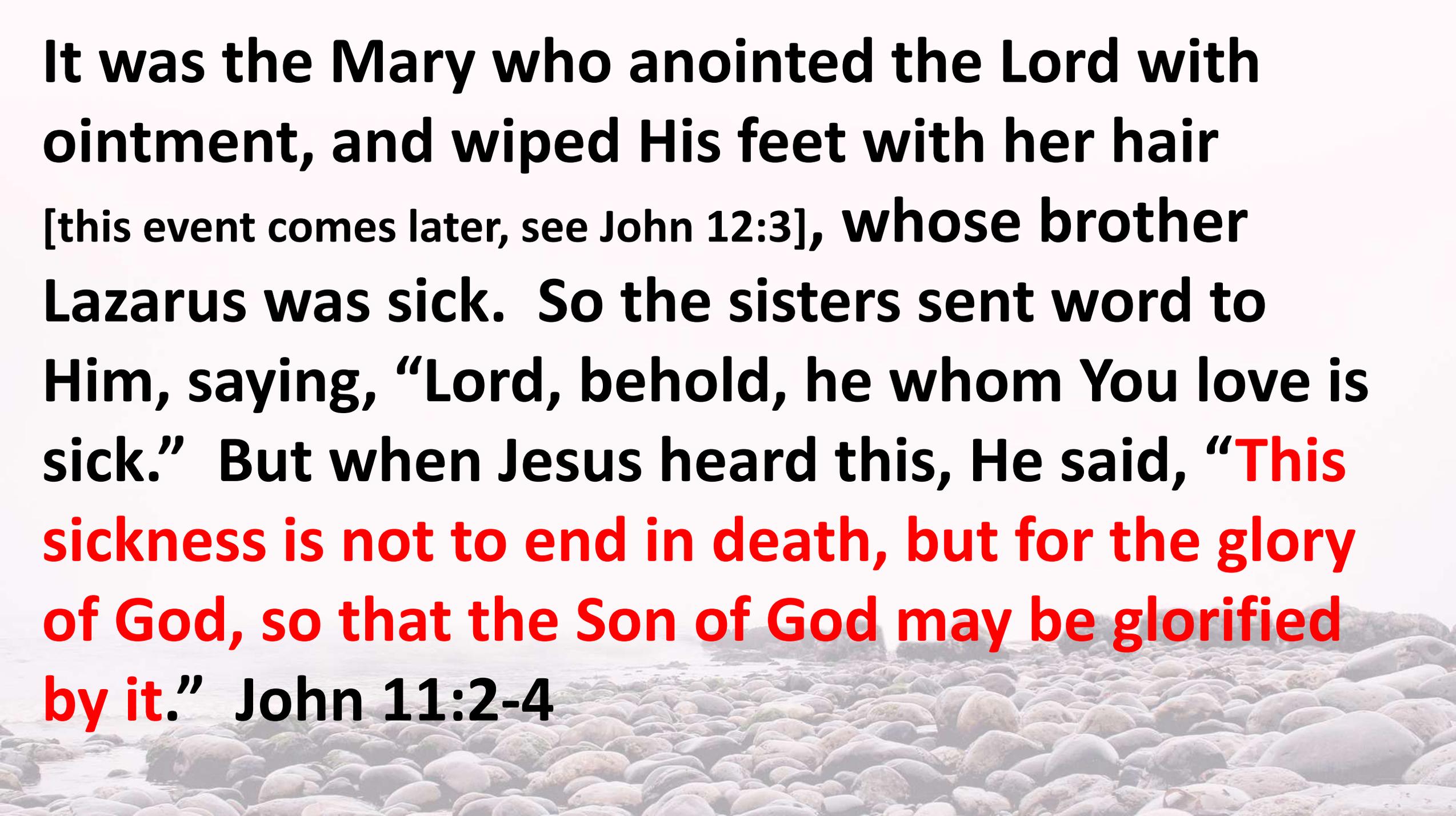
- **Bethany is “Beit-Anyah” in Hebrew, meaning “house of dates”**
- **Name “Lazarus” means “God is my helper” in Hebrew**
- **Lazarus appears in the Gospel story, not because of any shining qualities in his personality nor because of any resounding achievement, but solely because of the amazing miracle that was wrought upon him. – New Bible Dictionary**



Bethany of Judea, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about 3 km east of Jerusalem, was a favorite place of rest and refuge for Jesus. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem began here (Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-38).

Lots of Marys in the Bible

- 1. The wife of Joseph, the mother of Jesus**
- 2. Mary Magdalene, one of the women who ministered to Christ**
- 3. Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, who hosted Jesus at her home in Bethany**
- 4. Mary the wife of Cleopas is at the cross with Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus. She was that “other Mary” who was present with Mary of Magdala at the burial; she was one who went early in the morning of the first day of the week to anoint the body.**
- 5. Mary, the mother of John Mark, was one of the earliest disciples. She was the sister of Barnabas. Her house in Jerusalem was the common meeting-place for the disciples.**



It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair [this event comes later, see John 12:3], whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.**” John 11:2-4**

Now **Jesus loved** Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He then **stayed two days longer** in the place where He was [Bethany beyond the Jordan in Peraea].
John 11:5-6

***The delay of Jesus was intentional**

***Jesus' delay was not due to lack of love or fear of others**

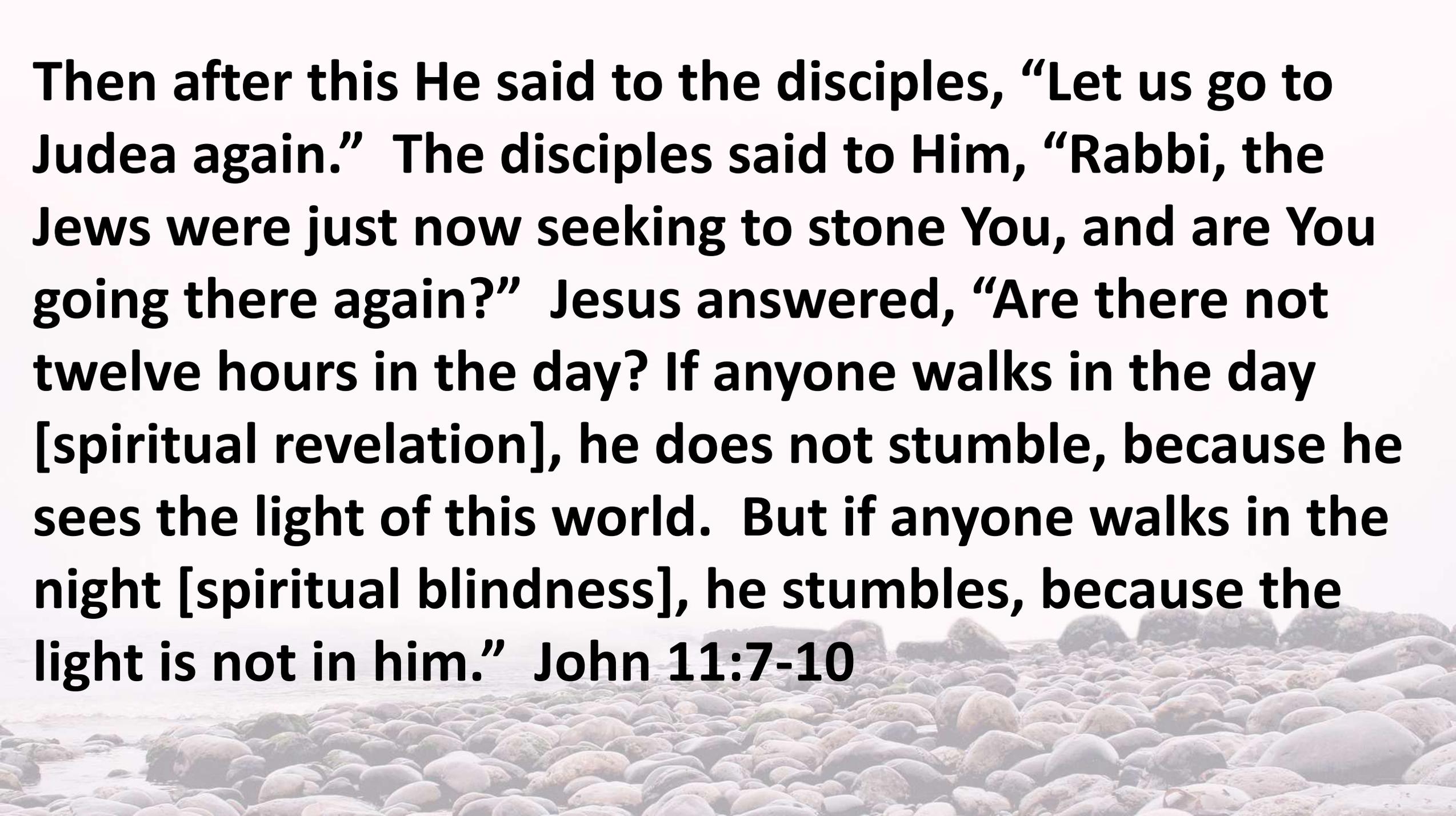
***If Jesus does not act when I ask Him to act, will I trust that He still loves me?**



2 different villages called Bethany

Jesus was at least 25 miles away from Bethany of Judea

Then after this He said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day [spiritual revelation], he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night [spiritual blindness], he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” John 11:7-10



This He said, and after that He [Jesus] said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.” The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. John 11:11-13

- **The word “friend” in Greek is φίλος *philos***
- **Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.” John 15:13-14**
- **and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. James 2:23 [quoting Genesis 15:6]**

So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.” John 11:14-16

We must remember...

***Jesus’ timing is different.**

***His desire is our faith.**

At first sight the statement that Jesus was glad He was not there must have mystified the disciples. But Jesus had a reason to be glad other than the restoration of Lazarus. In line with the purpose of the gospel, John points to the possibility of the development of faith in the disciples. It is almost as if Jesus was concentrating more specifically on the training of the Twelve than on the needs of the two sisters of Lazarus. His mission was bound up with the bringing of the disciples to faith.

Brian Dembowczyk wrote...

Jesus' delay led to Lazarus' death which led to Jesus' miracle which led to faith (John 11:15) which always leads to God's glory (John 11:4).

Had we written the script, we would have settled for so much less, wouldn't we have? Our version would have had Jesus rushing to Lazarus' side to heal him followed by a festive party of some sort. And we would have missed so much more that Jesus actually gave to His beloved friends. Jesus gave His friends a great gift when He allowed Lazarus to die. He gave them the gift of advancing their faith and drawing them that much closer to eternal life in Him, the Son of God. The resurrection of Lazarus is a wonderful demonstration of the power of Jesus, foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection, and picture of our new life in Jesus.

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb **four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary **stayed** [Greek verb καθέζομαι *kathhezomai* means “to sit”] at the house. John 11:17-20**

The Hebrew word “shiva” means “seven” and “sitting shiva,” refers to the Jewish custom of sitting in mourning for seven days following the death of a deceased parent, spouse, sibling or child. Her “sitting” was in fact specifically “mourning.” The Orthodox Jewish mourner sits unshod on the floor or on a low stool in the home of the deceased or his near relative and abstains from all ordinary work and diversions and even from required synagogue prayers, while friends visit him to comfort and pray with him. Both sisters observed the practice, which was not significantly different then from now; but Martha, who evidently had digested Yeshua’s counsel at Luke 10:41–42, was now the one willing to set custom aside and leave the house in order to meet Him. – Jewish New Testament Commentary

Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” John 11:21-22

What a mixture of emotions!

- Why did You not act sooner?**
- I still believe in Your power.**

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise [again].”

Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise [again] in the resurrection on the last day.”

John 11:23-24

How did Martha know this?

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:2

Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life**; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25-26

“resurrection is not something that Jesus does, resurrection is something that Jesus is”

- Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

Jesus' seven "I Am" statements in John's Gospel

- "I am the **bread of life.**" (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51) As bread sustains physical life, so Christ offers and sustains spiritual life.
- "I am the **light of the world.**" (John 8:12) To a world lost in darkness, Christ offers Himself as a guide.
- "I am the **door of the sheep.**" (John 10:7,9) Jesus protects His followers as shepherds protect their flocks from predators.
- "I am the **good shepherd.**" (John 10:11, 14) Jesus is committed to caring and watching over those who are His.
- "I am the **resurrection and the life.**" (John 11:25) Death is not the final word for those in Christ.
- "I am the **way, the truth, and the life.**" (John 14:6) Jesus is the source of all truth and knowledge about God.
- "I am the **true vine.**" (John 15:1, 5) By attaching ourselves to Christ, we enable His life to flow in and through us. Then we cannot help but bear fruit that will honor the Father.

Jesus taught about eternal life

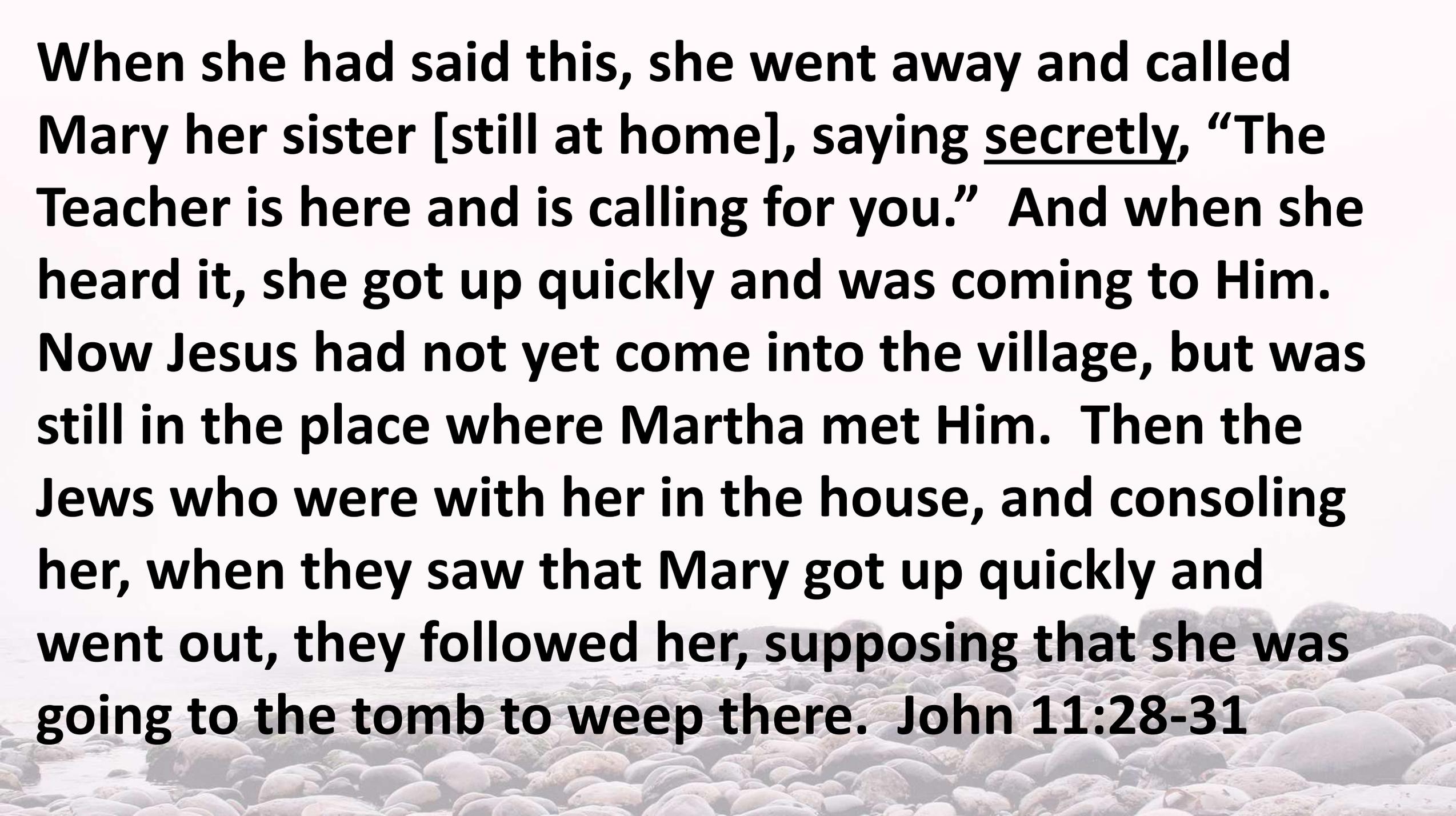
- αἰώνιος *aionios* - adjective in Greek translated as “eternal”
- “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have **eternal** life.”
John 3:16
- “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has **eternal** life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” John 5:24
- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give **eternal** life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:27-28

She [Martha] said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” John 11:27

What did Martha believe about Jesus?

- **He is the Christ / Messiah / Anointed One**
- **He is the Son of God – see John 1:49, Psalm 2:7**
- **He is the Coming One – see John 12:13**

When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister [still at home], saying secretly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. John 11:28-31



Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” John 11:32

Have you ever told God what His timing and actions should have been?



When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. John 11:33-35

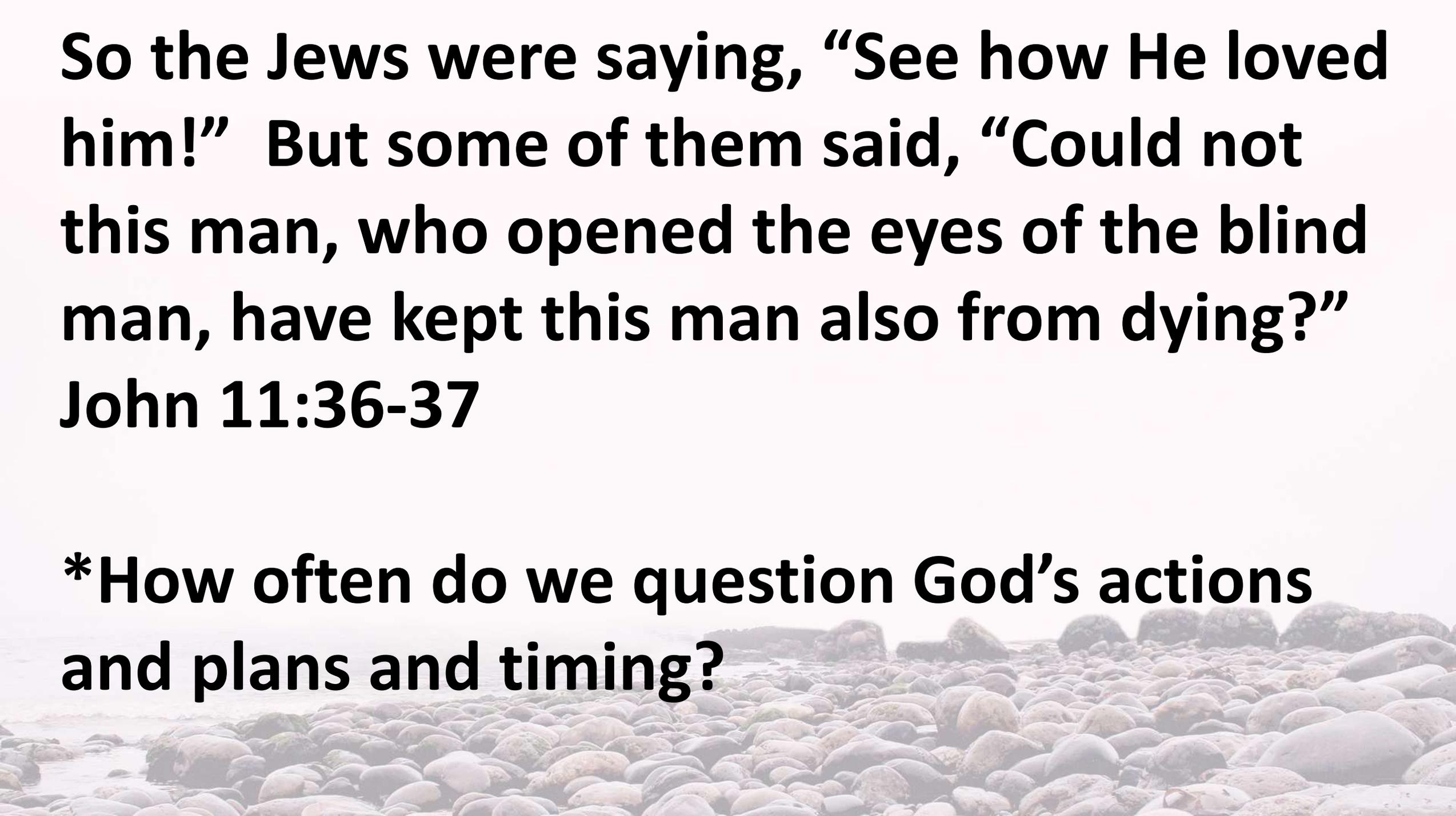
“Deeply moved” may either be translated “groaned” or more likely “angered.” The Greek word ἐμβριμάομαι *embrimaomai* seems to connote anger or sternness. This Greek verb is used only five times in the New Testament, each time of the Lord’s words or feelings.

See Matthew 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33, 38.

So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”

John 11:36-37

***How often do we question God’s actions and plans and timing?**



So Jesus, again being deeply moved within,
came to the tomb. **Now it was a cave, and
a stone was lying against it.**

John 11:38

Outside the Tomb of Lazarus today



Tomb with round stone



Outside the Tomb of Lazarus in 1906



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Lazarus#/media/File:Lazarus_Bethany.JPG

**Inside the
Tomb of
Lazarus.
The burial
chamber is
at lower
right.**



Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead **four days.” John 11:39**

- **Jerusalem Talmud: “For the first three days after death the soul floats above the body, thinking that it will return to the body. When the soul sees the body, that the appearance of the face has changed, it leaves the body and goes its way.” (Yebamot 16:3)**
- **An ancient stone found in the same geographic location where some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were also found... “In three days, live, I, Gabriel, command you.” (Gabriel’s Revelation Stone, Israel Museum)**
- **The idea of resurrection within three days was not a foreign concept to ancient Jews.**
- **Jesus waited for two more days, timing His arrival in such a way that He got to Bethany on the fourth day – when resurrection was no longer thought to be possible!**

Before medicine could distinguish clearly between being comatose and being dead, people were occasionally buried alive. Jewish burial practices attempted to eliminate this grisly possibility. According to a post-Talmudic tractate compiled in the eighth century AD, “We go out to the cemetery and examine the dead [to see if they are still alive and have been buried by mistake] for a period of three days and do not fear being suspected of engaging in the ways of the Amorites [i.e., superstitious practices]. Once a man who had been buried was examined and found to be alive; he lived for twenty-five years more and then died. Another such person lived and had five children before he died.” (S’machot 8:1) - Jewish New Testament Commentary

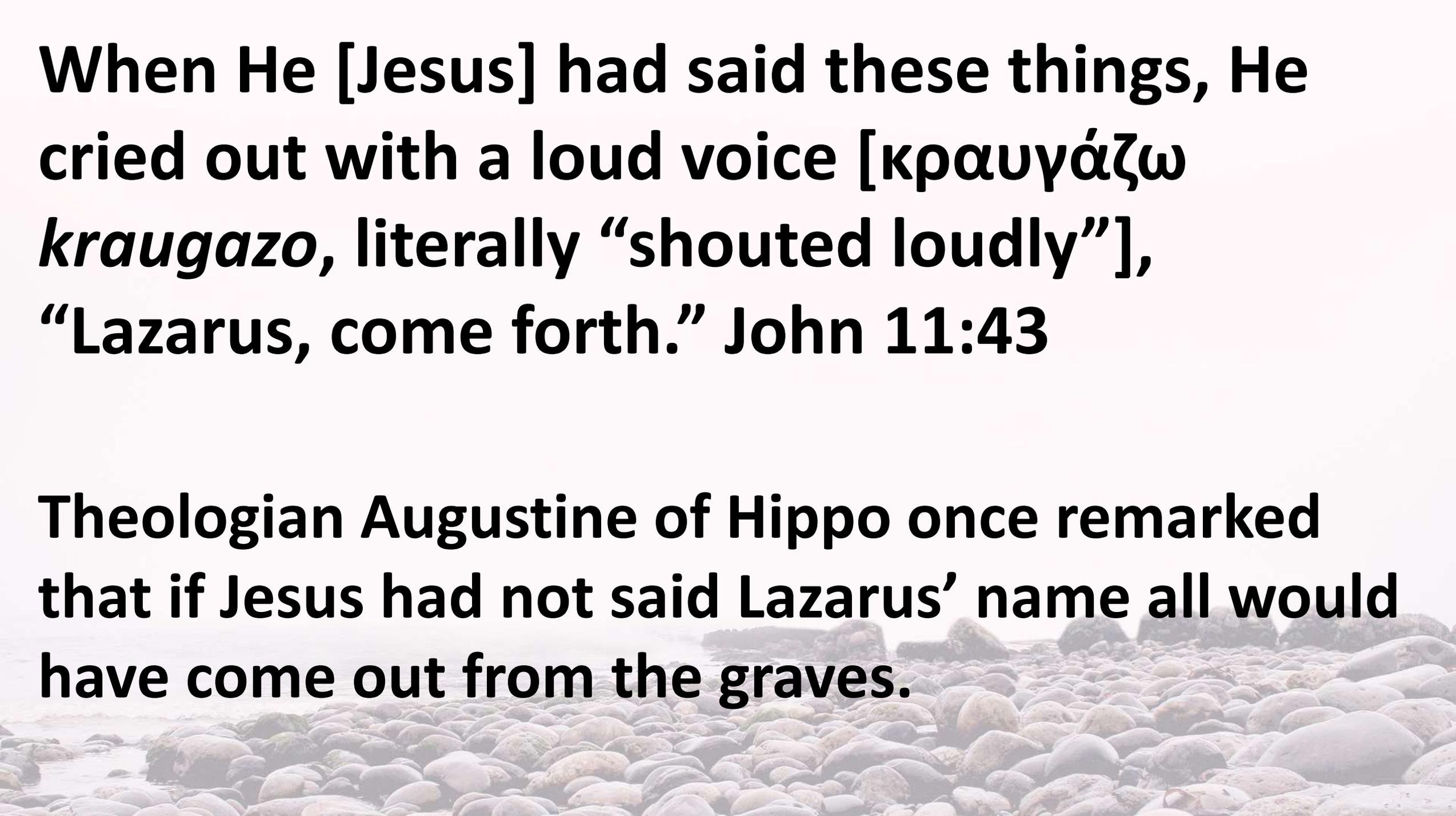
Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”

John 11:40-42



When He [Jesus] had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice [κραυγάζω *kraugazo*, literally “shouted loudly”], “Lazarus, come forth.” John 11:43

Theologian Augustine of Hippo once remarked that if Jesus had not said Lazarus’ name all would have come out from the graves.



The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” John 11:44

- **Are you ready to be delivered?**
- **Are you spiritually alive but still wearing grave clothes?**
- **Do you want to be unbound?**

How Can We Be Made Alive?

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-7**

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, **believed in Him. John 11:45**

Did you know that your consistent trust in Jesus, even during painful and difficult days, might help someone else come to believe in Him?



But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him [as Messiah], and the Romans will come and take away both our place [Temple] and our nation [because Rome will fear a revolt].” John 11:46-48

How can followers of Jesus help others believe in Him?

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that **one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish [in a revolt against the Romans].” Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he **prophesied** that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. John 11:49-53**

After Lazarus was raised from the dead, he returned to the home he shared with Mary and Martha (John 12:1–2). He was present when Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Knowing the miracle Jesus had recently performed, we understand why Lazarus' sister was so overcome with gratitude that she would go to such extravagant lengths. Lazarus may have been his sisters' only provider, and his death could have meant poverty for them both. Jesus had returned to them not only the brother they loved but the protector and provider they needed to survive.

Later...

The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. But the chief priests **planned to put Lazarus to death also**; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

John 12:9-11

***Is it possible that we could be such effective witnesses of the power and grace of Jesus that the non-believers would want to kill us in order to silence us?**

What Happened Next in the Life of Lazarus?

The Bible gives us no further information about Lazarus. Any additional details stem from church history and may or may not be accurate. One tradition holds that, after Jesus' ascension back into heaven, Lazarus and his sisters moved to Cyprus where Lazarus became the bishop of Kition and died of natural causes in AD 63. Another theory claims that Lazarus and his sisters moved to Gaul to preach the gospel, and Lazarus became the bishop of Marseilles, where he was beheaded under the tyranny of Emperor Domitian. Whatever happened to Lazarus between his first resurrection and his second death is unknown. But we can be certain that his physical body died a second time. And we know that, according to 1 Corinthians 15:51–53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14–17, Lazarus will be raised again from the dead to join all God's saints in eternity.

Which sibling are we?

- **Martha** – hurting and loud, calling out Jesus in public
- **Mary** – sad and quiet, facing struggles alone at home
- **Lazarus** – bound up, facing death, needing deliverance



Where is God in the midst of tragedy?

**Right where He always is,
on the throne of Heaven,
reaching out to us in love.**



Dealing with Tragedy

- Sin and death are real
- Jesus' love for us does not exempt us from sorrow and pain
- It is right and normal to grieve
- Learn to trust God's perfect timing
- Jesus understands pain and grief
- Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- The decisions we make in this life have eternal consequences

Dealing with Tragedy

- **Don't believe the lie that the presence of death means the absence of God**
- **Once we have received life from Jesus, as Lazarus did, stop living like death**
- **Help others remove the obstacles preventing them from meeting Jesus**
- **Help others who are new to faith in Jesus remove the grave clothes of doubt and fear**
- **Choose Life**

Where is God in the midst of tragedy?

**9/11 firefighter
Mike Kehoe**

