



# “Lazarus, Come Forth”

John 9-12

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## Introduction

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In these chapters, which conclude both the Feasts section and the public ministry, Jesus’ teachings on his mission and purpose are presented in the context of his attendance at key feasts in Jerusalem, including the fifth and sixth signs of his messiahship. He continued to confront obstinate Jewish leaders who refused to see him for who he really was, who ignored the signs of his identity, and thus rejected the very teachings that would bring them happiness and life eternal. As he neared his final Passover, he gave the final sign of his true identity by raising Lazarus from the dead, then triumphantly entered Jerusalem as its king, the only event John records of that last week before concluding Jesus’ public ministry and starting the private ministry at the Last Supper.

## Outline of John

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An overall outline for the book of John is as follows, with the section(s) covered in this lesson, in whole or in part, in bold:

- Prologue (1:1-18)
- The Book of Signs—Public Ministry (1:19 – 12:50)
  - Early Disciples (1:19-51)
  - First through Third Signs: Wedding, Nicodemus, Samaria, and Healing (2:1 – 4:54)
  - **Fourth through Sixth Signs: At the Feasts (5:1 – 10:42)**
  - **Seventh Sign: Lazarus and Public Ministry Climax (11:1 – 12:50)**
- The Last Supper—Private Ministry (13:1 – 17:26)
  - Washing Feet (13:1-30)
  - Farewell Discourse (13:31 – 16:33)
  - High Priestly Prayer (17:1-26)
- Death and Resurrection (18:1 – 21:25)
  - Arrest and Trial (18:1 – 19:16a)
  - Crucifixion and Burial (19:16b-42)
  - Resurrection Appearances (20:1 – 21:25)

Note: In each lesson on the gospels, where there are overlapping or parallel texts, those will be noted in the heading. References in bold are the preferred reading(s) and will be the principal section of analysis, though some unique points in the current gospel will be noted, as well as helpful JST changes.<sup>1</sup>

## The Book of Signs—Public Ministry (1:19 – 12:50)

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This lesson covers the last part of this section on the public ministry through the first twelve chapters.

In these chapters, John gives seven specific signs of Jesus’ identity, each of which shows something about the nature of the Messiah. In between are other stories that recount something about Jesus’ mission and teachings and how he is perceived by those around him. The seven signs are:

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<sup>1</sup> Not all JST changes are noted, only those of textual or doctrinal interest. Interested readers are encouraged to see Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* or the manuscripts themselves on the Joseph Smith Papers website ([josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org)).

1. Changing water into wine (2:1-11)
2. Cleansing the temple (2:13-22)
3. Healing the nobleman's son (4:46-54)
4. Healing a lame man (5:1-15)
5. Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-15)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1-41)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)

## Fourth through Sixth Signs: At the Feasts (5:1 – 10:42)

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In this section, teachings by Jesus are interspersed with three more signs of his identity. We'll finish this section out in this lesson discussing the sixth and seventh signs and related teachings and actions by the Savior at the feasts.

### A man born blind – John 9:1-12

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This chapter is called by one commentator "the masterpiece of Johannine dramatic narrative, so carefully crafted that not a single word is wasted."<sup>2</sup> As the man healed grows in his testimony of Jesus, he receives increasing persecution until he is finally cast out of the synagogue completely. Still, he stands firm in what he knows, despite the persecution and forced change of lifestyle. When John wrote his gospel, this story would have had particular relevance, with Christians being hounded, persecuted, and killed for professing faith in the Messiah. The blind man's victory would steel them for their trials and encourage them to increase their faith during a trying time. In a classic example of allegorical interpretation that resonates, one early Christian commentator declared, "This blind man stands for the human race."<sup>3</sup>

It might be easy to miss that this was only the third healing recorded in John. The other two are the nobleman's son (chapter 4) and the lame man at the pool (chapter 5). There will only be one more after this one—Lazarus. In John's efficient telling of Jesus ministry, these are all the signs needed to establish Jesus' messiahship.

9:1 **Jesus passed by.** The setting is still the Feast of the Tabernacles (7:2), which is true for nearly all of chapters 7-10. The man they saw was probably just outside the temple courtyard, hoping those leaving the holy grounds through the Huldah gates on the south during the feast would feel charity for him.

9:1 **blind from his birth.** It's not clear how they knew he was blind from birth. Perhaps he suffered some birth defect that made it obvious, or his story was well-known in Jerusalem as a beggar that everyone saw daily? Whatever the reason, Jewish belief at the time was that someone with an affliction such as this was a sinner (as reflected in the disciples' question in v. 2). This man's life would have been impossibly difficult. Not able to study or learn a trade as a young man, thus not able to marry or have a family, he had nothing left for him but to beg in the streets for money and food.

9:2 **who did sin, this man, or his parents.** Some rabbis entertained the notion that an unborn infant could have committed some sin to be born with a birth defect or other physical ailment at birth.<sup>4</sup> Non-LDS scholars either attribute the disciples' question to this attitude or to a "less likely" notion that "he might have sinned in a previous existence."<sup>5</sup> In reality, this question only makes sense if a person believes in a pre-mortal existence. The other possibility—that some sin of his parents was passed on to him as a punishment—was a common notion of the time and is implied in comments made following the later questioning of the parents by the Jewish council.

9:3 **Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.** Jesus refuted the notion that suffering was always the result of sin. Sinners do indeed suffer but righteous people also suffer—a critical message for the readers of John's gospel,

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 347-8.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *In Johannem* 44:1.

<sup>4</sup> The incident of Jacob struggling (competing, they say) in the womb with Esau is cited as an example; Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds*, 2:91.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, *The Gospel*, 208-209.

and us today. Suffering occurs for many reasons; in this case, Jesus said it was "that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

9:4 **it is day: the night cometh.** Jesus works in the day and the light. At night time, no one can really work in a society with only small lamps to light the way. This proverbial saying leads to a declaration of Jesus identity.

9:5 **I am light of the world.** The repetition of the phrase from John 8:12 and the sending of the man to Siloam (v. 7) echo the previous chapter's teachings and remind us again that Jesus is the Messiah, as expressed in the symbolism of the Feast of the Tabernacles. See Mosiah 16:9.

9:6 **spat on the ground, and made clay.** Though this may seem like an odd way to heal, the reason is obvious when you consider that it was the Sabbath day (v. 14) and the man could not see anything Jesus did. Jesus was healing a man whose life was not threatened (he had, after all, been in this condition his entire life) and on the Sabbath, a violation of their tradition. Then he broke another of their traditions by mixing saliva and dirt to make clay (considered one type of 'work'). Anointing someone's eyes was also considered a Sabbath violation by Pharisaic interpretation. Accordingly, healing by making clay and putting it on the man's eyes directly links three so-called 'Sabbath violations' to a single successful outcome—the healed eyes. Because of this, the event became a double statement: since healing could only be done by the power of God, it served as proof of Jesus' teachings; and his direct violation of these Sabbath traditions while doing the miracle refuted those particular practices. Finally, since the blind man could not see Jesus, this physical interaction served to give the man the sense of Jesus doing something directly to him. The saliva of a holy man was seen to have healing powers, perhaps helping bolster faith in the man who would demonstrate such conviction in the rest of the chapter.

9:6 **anointed the eyes.** An additional insight comes from the Greek word used for 'anointed,' which is not like 'placed' or 'smeared' but the same word for anointing with oil (and related to the word for Christ and Messiah, the anointed one). Coupled with Jesus' command to the man to go wash in the pool, we can see this as a sacred ordinance—he is anointed and washed, thereby giving him sight or new light. This is similar to Enoch's experience in Moses 6:35-36, which symbolically made him into a seer.

9:7 **Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent).** Siloam was at the southern end of the city of Jerusalem. The pool had this name because it was built about 700 B.C. by Hezekiah to capture within the city the water 'sent' through a tunnel he also built from the Gihon spring. Here Siloam became a symbol of Jesus: the blind man was 'sent' to wash in the pool, but was really sent to see Jesus, the Sent One of the Father.

9:9 **Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him.** After the man returned from the pool and could see, there was some question about his identity among the crowd, perhaps indicating that his physical appearance had somehow changed. Some recognized him while others could only say, 'It looks a bit like him.' The man himself assured everyone that he was indeed the one who was blind and now was not.

9:11 **A man that is called Jesus.** The formerly blind man could recount the events as he heard them but could offer no description of Jesus who anointed his eyes and sent him to wash. Jesus had evidently left the area but even if he were standing there, the blind man would not know it.

### Pharisees interrogate the blind man – John 9:13-34

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What happened next to the man shows how he was a symbol of us all. He was questioned by others, including the leaders of the Pharisees, and each time grew bolder in his testimony:

- He testified to the truth of the miracle—"I washed, and do see" (v. 15).
- He recognized Jesus' power—"He is a prophet" (v. 17) and "now I see" (v. 25).
- He testified of Jesus mission—"If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (vv. 31-33).
- He became Jesus' disciple—"Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (v. 38).

He progressively gained his testimony of the Savior, and it was strengthened by standing up to opposition. First, he merely "sees", experiencing a new life. Then as his experience was challenged, he took sides and began to understand the feelings that led him to believe. Finally, he encountered Jesus personally and worshipped him,

determining to leave behind the trappings of the world (represented by the synagogue) and follow Jesus. This marvelous pattern of conversion is a model for us.

- We wash (get baptized, take the Sacrament) and begin to see the truth.
- We recognize the power of God in our lives.
- We build our testimony through positive experience and facing up to opposition.
- We fully commit to being Jesus' disciples and worshipping him—doing his will.

9:14 ***it was the sabbath day***. This is where John let us know that this was not just a healing but a sabbath healing, violating several of the Jewish rules about work on the Sabbath.

9:16 ***there was a division among them***. This was exactly Jesus' point in conducting the miracle as he did. Some said he could not be "of God" because he broke Sabbath rules (as they had created them), while others said if he wasn't of God, he couldn't do such a miracle as this.

9:17 ***He is a prophet***. When asked by the council of Pharisees, the man took the side of those who said such a healing had to be from one who acted with God's power, and confessed that he believed Jesus was a prophet.

9:18 ***they called the parents***. Believing that this was somehow a great hoax of Jesus, they called the parents of the formerly blind man to query them about their son.

9:20 ***this is our son, and that he was born blind***. The parents readily acknowledged the man's identity and situation before the healing. Their testimony legally confirmed his story.

9:21 ***he is of age; ask him***. Not being present at the healing and because they were afraid of what the Jewish leaders could do to them (v. 22),<sup>6</sup> the parents declined to answer the question about how he could now see, telling the council to ask their son himself, who was old enough to be a legal witness.

9:24 ***Give God the praise***. Taking a new direction, the leaders tried to get the man to agree to give the glory to God for his healing but recognize that Jesus was a sinner for the way he did it.

9:25 ***I was blind, now I see***. The man refused to get drawn into the debate about Jesus but stuck to the facts: I was blind, he healed me, and now I see. End of story.

9:27 ***will ye also be his disciples?*** The Pharisees questioned the man again, asking him the same questions. Annoyed, he retorts that he doesn't understand why they keep asking him what he has already answered. Perhaps sincerely but likely with some sarcasm, he suggests that their continued queries must mean that they want to be Jesus' disciples.

9:28 ***we are Moses' disciples***. Angered at this question, they respond that he must be Jesus' disciple, but they only followed Moses.

9:30 ***ye know not from when he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes***. The "yet" is in italics in the KJV and is an interpretive addition, also found in several modern translations (e.g., NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV). But the Greek sense could also be that he is giving them two of their own criterion to identify the Messiah and pointing out that Jesus meets them both: they don't know his origin (which they just stated in v. 29) and he healed the blind.

9:31 ***God heareth not sinners***. Isaiah 1:15 teaches that God does not hear the prayers of sinners.

9:32 ***Since the world began was it not heard***. There is no account in scripture of a man born blind ever being given sight. Technically, it's not healing since he never has eyes that could see in the first place, and that's how he characterized his own experience—his eyes were "opened."

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<sup>6</sup> Being "put out" (v. 22) was equivalent to excommunication today, which could be given as a sentence for a week, month, or forever, depending on the situation. Such an action could have more impact than their spiritual situation; being put out of the synagogue would have social, political, and economic ramifications, essentially ostracizing them from Jewish society.

9:33 **If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.** Though he has had limited or no education or other such opportunities, this blind man who now sees perfectly used irrefutable logic to destroy the arguments of the Jewish leaders.

9:34 **Thou was altogether born in sins.** Angry and frustrated at his ability to use logic and their own teachings against them and having nothing of any substance to use as a response, the Pharisees again resorted to name calling, repeat the belief expressed in the disciples' first question about either he or his parents sinning (v. 2), and excommunicate him from the synagogue (compare John 6:37, where Jesus says he will never do that to someone that comes to him). For him, that may not have been much of a loss as he had probably never been a full member of any synagogue, given his condition.

### The blind man believes – John 9:35-41

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9:35 **Jesus heard.** Somehow Jesus got news about the healed man's status, and sought him out, asking if he believed "on the Son of God."

9:36 **Who is he, Lord.** The man still did not know who had healed him, even though he had supported him before the Jewish council and lost all ability to participate in Jewish worship services as a result.

9:37 **it is he that talketh with thee.** Perhaps an obscure way of saying, "It's me," but it has the feeling of humility in a third-person declaration of his identity.

9:38 **I believe.** The best manuscripts do not include v. 38 and the first words of v. 39 (And Jesus said); they were likely a late scribal addition to happily end the story about the blind man becoming a disciple. In most manuscripts, the statement about judgement in v. 39 simply are Jesus' next words after v. 37.

9:39 **For judgment I am come into this world.** Jesus asks us to choose and has come to here to help us judge or choose. He doesn't force our choice, but if we choose to follow him, we will see as never before. If we choose to follow Satan, we will be blinded by sin.

9:41 **If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.** When the Pharisees who evidently heard Jesus and the man talking asked if they were blind as well, Jesus replied that if that were the case, they would not be in a state of sin, rejecting him. But they could indeed see and yet rejected him anyway, their sin did remain unatoned.

### The good shepherd – John 10:1-21

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These verses continue the sermon begun after the healing of the blind man at the end of chapter 9 (a 'true' chapter break would be at 10:22). To follow through on the 'blindness' of the Jewish leaders, Jesus taught them in the metaphor of sheep and shepherd, with him playing multiple roles in the message. As the sheep that did not hear their shepherd's voice, Jesus thus illustrated that they were both blind to his identity in chapter 9 and deaf to his words in chapter 10.

10:1 **the same is a thief and a robber.** The two Greek words used are *kleptēs* and *lēptēs*, the former meaning someone who steals by stealth and the latter by open violence. The sheep stealer both sneaks in to do his evil deed but will commit violence to achieve his ends, such as killing the true shepherd.

10:4 **the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.** Jesus' listeners would not have thought of this as a parable or metaphor at first but would have simply nodded and said, "Yes, we all know that's how sheep herding works." Many shepherds would be with their sheep in the fields by day. At night they would put all the various flocks into a single sheepfold, usually an enclosure made with rock walls lined with thorns so animals and thieves wouldn't easily climb over. There was one door (or gate), guarded at night by a porter or door-keeper. In some cases there was no physical gate, so the door-keeper would sit or lay in the opening himself, becoming the gate and protecting the sheep. In the morning, the shepherd would return and be recognized by the door-keeper who let him enter. After passing through the door, he would call out his sheep individually by name. The sheep knew his voice and followed him out to graze for the day. The other sheep would stay and wait for their own shepherds to come call them. Compare Ezekiel 34:2-15 and Alma 5:37-38.

10:7 ***I am the door of the sheep.*** Jesus applied this image of the sheepfold to himself in more than one way. First, he is the door, the only way in or out of the sheepfold. Only through Jesus can we enter the kingdom of God and be saved. It is reminiscent of a messianic psalm, a part of the *Hallel* sung by Jews at Passover and other times: "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:19-23).

10:8 ***All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers.*** Jesus appears to be saying that even the prophets of the OT were trying to steal sheep. The JST footnote is very helpful here, adding, "All that ever came before me **who testified not of me** are thieves and robbers." The prophets came before him but are not in this category because they testified of Christ.

10:9 ***go in and out, and find pasture.*** As the person watching the door, Jesus makes sure that the sheep are safe ("saved") when they enter the sheepfold and lets them go in and out to find nourishment.

10:10 ***I am come that they might have life.*** Evil leaders of the people have as their intent to steal, kill, and destroy, for their own benefit. Jesus came to give "abundant" life to all the sheep.

10:11 ***I am the good shepherd.*** After first calling himself the gate (or the porter that lies in the gate), Jesus also said that he was the good shepherd. He knows his sheep individually and cares for them intimately. Just as a shepherd would risk his life to protect the sheep, so Jesus gave his life for us. He is not like a hired servant who would run away at the first sign of danger but is the good shepherd who knows and loves his sheep.

In the Old Testament, Joshua (who has the same name as Jesus in Hebrew) was called using similar language: "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:16-17). Moses is also spoken of as a shepherd (Isaiah 63:11). In many other passages, God is portrayed as the good shepherd and his people as sheep (for example, see Genesis 48:15; 49:24 [which also links the shepherd and stone images]; Psalm 23:1; 28:9; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:2-31).

10:13 ***The hireling fleeth.*** A "hireling" is a hired servant, there to do a job. The sheep are not his so he is not willing to put himself at risk for them, but runs away at the first sign of trouble.

10:14 ***know my sheep, and am known of mine.*** When Jesus walks in the sheepfold, he can point out each of his own sheep, and when he calls to them, they know his voice and come to him.

10:15 ***even so I know the Father.*** Jesus compared his relationship to the sheep to that he had with the Father, who each know each other intimately.

10:16 ***other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.*** Most non-LDS commentaries believe the "other sheep" to be the Gentiles, and well might we agree if it were not for 3 Nephi 15:16-24, where we learn that the other sheep are the people in the land of the Nephites who personally hear his voice, and that there are even other sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus visited. Someday we'll hopefully have the record of those visits, too!

10:17 ***I lay down my life.*** This (with v. 18) is a clear statement from Jesus of the power given him by the Father over his own life and death. Joseph Fielding Smith explained it this way: "Jesus had no father of the flesh, that is who was mortal and subject to death. Our Eternal Father to whom we pray is the Father of the body of Jesus Christ and from his Father he inherited life and death was always subject to him. He had the power to lay down his life, because he was the Son of Mary who was like us, mortal, and he had the power to take his life up again for that power was in him."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Answers to Gospel Questions 1:33.

10:21 **Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?** Tying the sermon back to the previous chapter, the crowd erupts into a controversy, with some saying “He hath a devil, and is mad” (v. 20) and others correctly seeing the healing of the blind man in chapter 9 as a sign of the truth of his words.

## Jesus rejected at the feast – John 10:22-42

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10:22 **the feast of the dedication.** The Feast of Dedication began after the successful Maccabean rebellion in 164 BC. Today we call it Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights. In 167 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes ('god manifest') desecrated the temple by offering a sacrifice of a pig to a pagan god. A Jewish priest, Mattathias, rallied the people and with his son Judas (nicknamed *maccabaeus*, or 'hammer') defeated the Seleucid armies. They cleansed the temple and rededicated it, starting a period of freedom in Israel that lasted until the Roman army arrived in about 63 BC. The Feast focused on the lighting of lamps which today is represented by the seven-branched menorah.

10:22 **it was winter.** The feast was held in mid-December then, as it is today, thus pre-dating the Christian celebration of Christmas in that month by hundreds of years.

10:23 **Solomon's porch.** A covered area on the east side of the outer courtyard of the temple (nearest the Mount of Olives), used for meetings by the Sanhedrin for a time and as a gathering place during the colder months. It may have been part of Solomon's original temple, preserved in subsequent temple modifications, including Herod's massive reconstruction.

10:24 **If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.** The Jews sought for a direct assertion from Jesus that he was the Messiah (Christ comes from the Greek *christos* meaning 'anointed' which is the same as Messiah or *mashiach* in Hebrew). He replied that he had told them and shown them (words and deeds) that he was, but they did not believe him (v. 25).

10:26 **ye are not of my sheep.** Returning to his teaching of a few months earlier, Jesus again evoked the metaphor of a sheep and their shepherd, declaring that the blind and deaf Jewish leaders were not sheep who knew him.

10:28 **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.** Jesus claimed those who became his disciples, who listened to his teachings, and promised them “eternal life.”

10:29 **greater than all.** The Father is greater than everything and because of his support, no one could steal Jesus' sheep from him.

10:30 **I and my Father are one.** Jesus said that he and the Father are one, amounting to a claim to divinity for himself. The noun *one* is neuter in Greek, so Jesus was not saying they were the same person but united in purpose and mission. Jesus is the shepherd of the Father's sheep, united with him in saving them. Because the Jewish leaders understood but did not believe this claim, they were prepared to stone him for blasphemy (v. 31; see Leviticus 24:14-16 for the law about stoning for blasphemy).

10:32 **for which of those works do ye stone me?** Jesus challenged them to declare what evil things he has done that are worthy of stoning, for he has done “many good works.”

10:33 **for blasphemy.** In their minds, Jesus, a man, made himself equal to God by his words, which he had indeed done. The question was it also true? If it was, there is no crime.

10:34 **Is it not written in your law.** To refute the charge of blasphemy, Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 (which he interestingly called “the law” even though it's not in the *Torah*): “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” He asked them that if God called them gods, how could his claim be blasphemy?

10:36 **whom the Father hath sanctified.** The better translation is probably “consecrated” which has the meaning of set apart to a specific function, made holy, dedicated. Compare John 17:19.

10:37 **If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.** The challenge to the Jews was to judge Jesus by what he had done; if they were not the works of God, righteous activities, then they didn't need to believe him.

10:38 **believe the works**. In fact, he went so far as the challenge them to ignore his teaching and just recognize the many signs he had given them. Each of them were signs that Jews readily anticipated would be manifest when the Messiah came.

10:39 **he escaped out of their hand**. As with other confrontations in John, when the authorities tried to capture Jesus, he miraculously was able to avoid them and maintain his freedom. Only when he was ready and it was the Father's will could Jesus be taken.

10:40 **went away again**. After this confrontation, Jesus and his disciples left the city and went across the Jordan river to where John first baptized. More importantly, it was out of the influence of the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. Jesus' mission had come full circle back to the place where he was baptized.

## Seventh Sign: Lazarus and Public Ministry Climax (11:1 – 12:50)

In the book of John, the raising of Lazarus is a major turning point as Jesus moves from his ministry of teaching and healing to his final confrontation with the Jewish leaders which will result in his crucifixion. It is a bridge between the signs of his calling and the fulfilling of his calling. We don't know exactly when this happened, but it was sometime toward the latter part of the Perea ministry. The likely scenario is that they went into Perea, returned after Lazarus' death, then went back to Perea for a time before returning again to Jerusalem for the Passover. The events at Jericho in the other gospels were probably during one or more of these journeys back and forth.

### The death of Lazarus – John 11:1-16

11:1 **Lazarus**. Lazarus is a form of Eleazar (Hebrew *El'azar*), meaning 'whom God helps,' a relatively common name in New Testament times.

11:1 **Bethany**. This was a village about two miles east of Jerusalem, on the other side of the Mount of Olives and on the road to Jericho. There are two towns called Bethany in the New Testament—this one and the place where John the Baptist baptized (see commentary on John 1:28), which was probably the region called Bashan in the Old Testament. Today it is called El-'Azariyeh after this story about Lazarus.

11:1 **Mary and his sister Martha**. In 1873, a tomb was discovered in Bethany by Charles Clermont-Ganneau with several inscribed ossuaries (bone boxes) dating from this period, including inscriptions of Mary (in Greek), Martha, and Lazarus (in Aramaic, Eleazar). Mary is a common name, the Greek version of the Old Testament name Miriam. Martha is an Aramaic name, meaning something like "lady" (the female version of 'sir'). Lazarus, as mentioned above, is a Hebrew name. It is not at all certain that these boxes belong to the people in this chapter, but the discovery does lend support to idea of people of perhaps the same family and with those names living in Bethany at the time of Christ.

11:2 **Mary which anointed the Lord**. John hasn't actually told us this story yet (it's in his chapter 12). His mentioning it here shows one or both of two things: 1) The people to whom he was writing probably already knew the story, so it's as if he's saying, 'If you remember Mary who anointed the Lord, you'll know who I mean'; 2) John's gospel was written after Matthew and Mark and his readers were familiar with them because they tell a similar story (though the details are quite different and may point to two such anointings).

### 11:2 JST

John 11:2 KJV	JST
{It was <del>that</del> Mary <del>which</del> anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.}	and Mary, his sister, who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, <b>lived with her sister Martha, in whose house her</b> brother Lazarus was sick.

This interesting JST change promotes the parenthetical remark to be a stronger part of the narrative, and confirms that it was Martha's house and Mary lived with her. Lazarus appears to have lived elsewhere but came to his sisters' home when he was sick and there died. See also verse 17.

11:3 **his sisters sent unto him.** Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick, clearly hoping he would come and heal him. They referred to Lazarus as “he whom thou lovest,” implying a strong relationship, but this is the only place in the four gospels where we learn of Jesus’ relationship to him.

11:4 **This sickness is not unto death.** Jesus knew Lazarus would die but also knew he would raise him, so from his perspective, the sickness was not unto death, but was happening “that the Son of God might be glorified.”

11:5 **Now Jesus loved.** This shows that Jesus had very personal relationships in his lifetime. It also shows that though Jesus didn't immediately go to him, it wasn't out of a lack of concern for Lazarus.

11:6 **he abode two days still.** Lazarus may have still been alive when they received the message, but waiting two more days indicates that Jesus deliberately delayed his journey until Lazarus’ death. It would take them two more days to arrive at Bethany from northern Perea (see John 10:40), thus making four days since Lazarus died (verse 17).

11:6 **JST**

John 11:6 KJV	JST
<del>When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.</del>	<b>And Jesus tarried two days after he heard that Lazarus was sick.</b>

This JST change simplifies the message of the verse without changing the meaning.

11:8 **the Jews of late sought to stone thee.** This was recounted in John 10:31, 39. The disciples feared for his life, and perhaps their own. They don't seem to realize that Jesus wished to return on account of Lazarus. They had accepted his statement that his illness was not fatal, so didn't understand why he'd walk into such a dangerous situation. Or perhaps they believed that he could just heal Lazarus without going there in person, as he had done on other occasions, and remain safely away from the Jerusalem authorities.

11:9 **are there not twelve hours in a day.** The day was divided into twelve hours, though the length of the 'hours' varied based on the season. Since almost all work was done in the daylight, Jesus was in effect saying, 'There are twelve hours in which you can make progress (a better translation of 'walk') because you can see what you're doing.' The expression could also simply mean, 'You have to take advantage of the opportunities when they are presented.' Though it was the eleventh hour of Jesus' mortal life, he could not hide but needed to continue to do the work he came to do right up to the twelfth hour.

11:10 **there is no light in him.** From talking about the light of day, Jesus shifted to the light within. Someone walking at night (metaphorically) is living in sin. They stumble because they have no light to guide them.

11:11 **Lazarus sleepeth.** The progression is interesting here. First, Jesus told them that Lazarus was sleeping. The disciples responded that that must be good because that would help him get better (v. 12). But they were not getting it, so Jesus spoke plainly and told them Lazarus was dead (v. 14).

11:15 **glad for your sakes that I was not there.** Jesus healing Lazarus would certainly have been miraculous. But Jesus had other plans that would make a stronger impact on the faith of his disciples.

11:16 **Thomas, which is called Didymus.** The Greek word *didymos* means 'twin' as does the Hebrew word for Thomas (*teom*). This man—unfortunately labeled 'Doubting Thomas' by some—must have had a twin brother or sister—perhaps a more well-known one, since he is known simply as 'the twin.' Some overly speculative writers have actually imagined that Thomas was somehow Jesus' twin, but that has no basis in scripture whatsoever.

11:16 **that we may die with him.** This shows tremendous commitment and bravery on Thomas' part, and all the other apostles since they agreed with his statement and went up to Jerusalem also. This was no imagined danger; the Jews have already tried to kill Jesus and will surely try again. Did John include this to offset the 'doubting' episode after the resurrection? We should remember Thomas for this as much as that other incident.

11:16 **JST**

<b>John 11:16 KJV</b>	<b>JST</b>
Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.	Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. <b>For they feared lest the Jews should take Jesus and put him to death, for as yet they did not understand the power of God.</b>

The JST adds some insight into the feelings of the apostles, that they feared Jesus would be killed, but John or the editor comments that they should not have feared this; it was only because they didn't yet understand God's power. That Jesus had miraculously escaped the plots of the authorities several times already seems to have escaped their attention.

### I am the resurrection and the life – John 11:17-27

11:17 **in the grave four days.** This shows that Lazarus was truly dead. According to Jewish tradition, the spirit hovered near the body for three days, hoping to re-enter it, but seeing the decay after three days, it finally departed, so on the fourth day, a person is gone for certain. Families were expected to check a body on the third day to see if perhaps the person may still be alive, and stories were told about people who were buried and then discovered to still be alive, a not too surprising event, considering that they had no reliable way to measure heartbeat, breathing, brain activity, or anything else we use today to check for life.

#### 11:17 JST

<b>John 11:17 KJV</b>	<b>JST</b>
<del>Then</del> when Jesus came, <del>he found that he had <i>lain</i></del> in the grave four days <del>already</del> .	<b>And when Jesus came to Bethany, to Martha's house, Lazarus had already been in the grave four days.</b>

This change confirms that Martha was the owner of the house and emphasizes the fact of Lazarus' death being four days previously, while de-emphasizing the seeming discovery of that fact by Jesus (implying he did not have foreknowledge). This matches the high Christology of the gospel of John wonderfully, demonstrating Jesus' divine abilities well before the resurrection.

11:18 **fifteen furlongs.** In Greek, this says fifteen *stadia*, one of which is about 200 yards, thus making Bethany about 3,000 yards, or 1.7 miles, from Jerusalem.

11:19 **many of the Jew came.** The text implies that the two sisters and their brother were well-known so that many came to offer them comfort and support on this the day of Lazarus' official death.

11:20 **Martha . . . went and met him.** This was Martha who, in another gospel, was busy serving and wanting Mary to help (Luke 10:40-42). Perhaps in contrast, John here shows a deep level of discipleship and faith on her part.

11:20 **Mary sat still in the house.** The Greek says simply, 'Mary sat in the house,' exactly where a person sits when receiving people during mourning. It wasn't that she deliberately stayed behind while Martha ran out to greet Jesus, but rather that Martha heard he was coming and left without telling Mary (see Mary's reaction when she hears is in v. 29).

11:21 **if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.** Martha expressed what was likely on the minds of many: if only Jesus had come sooner, he could have healed Lazarus! She was not accusing Jesus of anything, just regret that his arrival was too late.

11:22 **whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.** Martha's testimony came out strongly in this and the following verses, even anticipating the miracle that Jesus will actually do with her brother's dead body. Though not in John's gospel, we can surmise that she knew he had raised others from the dead—but never after four days. Nevertheless, her faith was that his power could even bring back someone truly dead.

11:23 ***Thy brother shall rise again.*** Even though she had faith that God would do whatever Jesus asked (v. 22), she still saw this statement not in the short-term, but as a theological statement that someday he would be raised in the resurrection (v. 24).

11:25 ***I am the resurrection and the life.*** When he fed the thousands, he was the bread of life. When the priests lit the huge lampstands and poured water under the altar, he was the light of the world and the living water. Now anticipating Lazarus' miracle, he was the resurrection and the life. The phrases following this verse expand on and explain this statement. He is the source of bodily resurrection: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (v. 25). He is the source of eternal life: "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (v. 26).

11:27 ***thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*** One of the most direct testimonies of Jesus came from the mouth of Martha, a female disciple who in other scripture is often cast as someone who cares more about entertaining.

### Jesus raises Lazarus from death – John 11:28-44

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11:28 ***The Master is come.*** The Greek word for "master" is *didaskalos*, meaning 'teacher.' That Martha should refer to Jesus this way to Mary shows that they were both his disciples, very unusual in that day for women. Jesus accepted all children of our heavenly Father and offered them equal chances to learn and grow.

11:29 ***she arose quickly, and came unto him.*** As soon as Mary heard Jesus was nearby, she got up and left all those there to comfort her, just as Martha had done.

11:30 ***not yet come into town.*** The house is in town, but the tomb is outside of it. Jesus is staying there, perhaps to avoid the whole mourning activity going on at their house, or perhaps just to be closer to Lazarus.

11:31 ***She goeth unto the grave to weep there.*** The mourners and supporters saw Mary leave in haste (though apparently not Martha earlier) and assumed she was going to the grave to mourn, so they went out after her, surely seeking to continue to provide support and love in her time of need.

11:32 ***fell down at his feet.*** It is not mentioned that Martha did that. Mary appears to be the more outwardly emotional of the two, collapsing and weeping in front of Jesus.

11:32 ***my brother had not died.*** Mary's first words are exactly the same as Martha's, echoing her strong faith and probably their common discussion for the last four days.

11:33 ***he groaned in the spirit.*** "Groaned" is a weak word for the Greek *embrimaomai*, which implies anger and sternness. Other translations say he was "deeply moved," but I would say, 'he was angry at death.'

11:33 ***was troubled.*** Again, the Greek word *tarassō* is stronger than "troubled," implying rather agitation and being in distress or anguish, with a touch of anger.

11:34 ***come and see.*** When Jesus asked where Lazarus was, they invited him to "come and see," a fascinating echo of Jesus' invitations at the beginning of John's gospel to learn more about him.

11:35 ***Jesus wept.*** The shortest verse in the Bible has a rich meaning. Jesus didn't just shed a casual tear or quietly wipe his eyes; the verb used is *dakryō* or 'burst into tears.' The crowd thought he cried for Lazarus (v. 36), but he knew what he was going to do for Lazarus in just a few minutes. Instead, he was deeply moved by the pain felt by his beloved friends.

11:37 ***this man should not have died.*** Some in the crowd became a third witness after the sisters to the idea that had Jesus only arrived sooner, he could have saved Lazarus. After all, had he not opened the eyes of a man born blind?

11:38 ***again groaning.*** Same word as verse 33. He is still deeply agitated.

11:38 ***a cave, and a stone lay upon it.*** A very typical upper-class cave in the area around Jerusalem. Often cut in old quarries to provide a vertical front wall, they would use existing caves and enlarge or refine them as tombs,

usually with a large main hall having shelves as resting places for the bodies, and a small side room for the ossuaries or bone boxes in which the bones were placed about a year after burial. Stones were either wedged or rolled in front of the door to keep animals out. In this case, the stone does not roll (v. 41 says they "took away" the stone or 'moved it').

11:39 **he stinketh**. Martha was not supposing this. According to the custom, she surely went into the tomb the day before to make sure he was truly dead. She knew that "he stinketh."

11:40 **thou shouldest see the glory of God**. Jesus' call to Martha to have faith because she was about to see the glory of God must have given Martha real hope, as she wondered if her desire might really come to pass.

11:41 **lifted up his eyes**. We mostly close our eyes in prayer today but a serious prayer in Jesus' day would have been offered with face up and eyes looking toward heaven, and probably arms raised as well in supplication and praise. Jesus' prayer was one of gratitude and recognition, spoken out loud so that those around him would hear the words and have their faith strengthened (v. 42).

11:43 **cried with a loud voice**. He didn't need to yell on Lazarus' account—he was dead, not deaf. He did the opposite of what many wizards of his day did—spoke loudly. Wizards quietly mumbled their incantations, so others would not steal their secret words. Jesus cried out so everyone could hear his simple but authoritative command. He had promised this would happen in John 5:25.

11:44 **bound hand and foot**. Lazarus was wrapped in burial clothing, which tightly wrapped his whole body and included a cloth placed over his face. His jaw was tied up so it would stay closed and keep his face with a more dignified appearance. Legs and feet were wrapped together, and arms and hands were wrapped against the sides. He would barely be able to walk and could not see or talk until they untied him, which the amazed sisters did after Jesus told them, "Loose him, and let him go."

#### [Caiaphas seeks to kill Jesus – John 11:45-57](#)

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11:45 **believed on him**. The results for observers were mixed: many believed after seeing this great miracle, but some plotted even more strongly against him (verses 47-53). Miracles don't create faith, but they will enhance it and if it's already there.

11:46 **told them what things Jesus had done**. Some in the crowd went to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and told them what had happened in Bethany. Evidently, none of them had come to comfort the family and so didn't know until they received these reports.

11:47 **gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees**. That these two opposing factions among Judaism came together against Jesus shows the threat they thought he posed to them. The chief priests were almost exclusively Sadducees. Under the direction of the high priest, they ran the temple and the legal and ecclesiastical councils. The Pharisees were the experts on the law, so some of them sat on the councils also. The two groups disagreed on many things, doctrinally, politically, and philosophically. But they were apparently able to set that aside enough to agree on a course of action against Jesus.

11:47 **a council**. The Greek word here is *synedrion*, from which we get the word Sanhedrin. Though we often view the Sanhedrin as the central Jewish authority, there was, in fact, a *synedrion* in almost every town. Usually it was a council of elders organized to decide small legal issues. But in Jerusalem, it was often referred to as the Great Sanhedrin, not so much because they had a larger legal authority, but because they were the council for the city at the heart of Judaism. The high priest would have called a meeting of the council, though this one appears to be more informal, based on the recorded conversations. This is the only time in the gospel of John when the word appears, though there are other gatherings of Jewish leaders that may have been such a meeting of the chief council.

11:48 **The Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation**. This was the true fear of the elders: that Jesus would come as a false messiah and win the hearts of the people, which would make the Romans think they were rebelling. This would in turn cause the Romans to take away from the Jews their land, specifically the

temple, and attack their people. Of course, when John wrote this, it was after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, so they had done exactly what the Jewish leaders feared, but for the opposite reason—the Jews had rejected Jesus' message and his disciples' testimonies.

11:49 ***Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year.*** Joseph bar Caiaphas was high priest from AD 18-36. His father-in-law, Annas, was high priest from AD 6-15, with three other men between them. Though in the Mosaic Law, high priests were appointed for life (which is why Annas is also sometimes called high priest; see Exodus 40:15), in Jesus' day it had become a political office, and they were appointed by Roman officials, often quickly removed from office when they displeased those officials. The majority of high priests between Annas and the destruction of Jerusalem were only in for a year, Caiaphas being the notable exception.

In what is probably the closest, verified archaeological discovery of the life of Jesus, Caiaphas' ossuary (bone box) was discovered in a tomb unearthed by workmen at the south end of Jerusalem in 1990. In the ossuary were the bones of six people, two infants, a child between two and five years, a teenage boy, an adult woman, and a man about sixty years old. The man's bones were probably Caiaphas'. Other ossuaries in the tomb had similar collections, and it was determined that this was their family tomb.

11:50 ***that one man should die for the people.*** Caiaphas' reason behind this statement was that one should be sacrificed to save the rest of them from Roman anger, but John or the editor saw a prophetic statement about Jesus in his words that even the high priest himself didn't understand but spoken because of his office (v. 51). Compare this with Nephi's experience in 1 Nephi 4:13.

11:51 ***not for that nation only.*** John/the editor widens the application of the statement beyond the nation of Israel to other people who by his day had embraced the story of Jesus and followed him with faith.

11:52 ***to put him to death.*** The Sanhedrin officially decreed that Jesus was an enemy of the state and began to seek a way to kill him in order to stop the potential rebellion they saw building around him.

11:53 ***into a city called Ephraim.*** Having come to the Jerusalem area to raise Lazarus from the dead, Jesus then departed back to hiding to await the time for him to make his last journey to the city. The location of Ephraim is unknown but perhaps near Bethel (see 2 Samuel 13:23).

11:54 ***went thence unto a country near to the wilderness.*** Jesus went back to Perea after raising Lazarus, but we don't know for how long. It was a few weeks at most and may have been only a few days. This shows that the estimation by some that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead on Friday or Saturday before his crucifixion cannot be correct.

11:55 ***the Jews' passover was nigh.*** After a passage of an unknown amount of time, Passover was nearing again, and many Jews began to move toward the capital to prepare for that feast.

11:56 ***What think ye, that he will not come.*** The crowds debated Jesus' coming: with the council looking for him, would he come to the Passover this time or not?

11:57 ***if any man know where he were.*** The Sanhedrin put out a command that anyone with knowledge of Jesus' whereabouts was to immediately tell them, "that they might take him." The hunt was on.

### Jesus is anointed at Bethany – John 12:1-8 (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50)

John had already mentioned the anointing (11:2) but now presents it in the correct chronological sequence. The other accounts in Matthew and Mark are included here for reference but were likely other events—a different time and setting in Jesus' ministry, a different woman, and for a different purpose. Luke's account also is quite different but included as a reference here for comparison.

12:1 ***six days before the passover.*** Counting days gets tricky because to the people of that period, the new day started at sunset and the current day was often counted as "one." Thus we view the evening as the end of the day, while they see it as the beginning of the next. Jesus' arrival at Bethany in these verses would have been on what we call Friday evening (Saturday to the Jews, after sunset), meaning on the Sabbath. That is six days before the

Passover, which will start on the next Thursday evening at sunset (Friday to them). The "supper" here was the next day, at the end of the Sabbath (Saturday to us, Sunday to them), lasting into the evening.

12:1 **Bethany, where Lazarus was.** Bypassing Jerusalem for the time being, Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, at Lazarus' home this time, it would seem.

12:2 **Martha served.** Martha acted as a deacon (*diakoneō*, to wait on tables); as she had been a female witness for Jesus' mission and identity before Lazarus was raised from the dead (11:27), so now she is the model servant.

12:3 **a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly.** This was perfume derived from the spike (hair stem) of the nard plant, which grew in the mountains of northern India. A "pound" was a *litra*, or today about twelve ounces in weight. Nard was burned for incense in the temple and in the preparation of some food for the wealthy.

12:3 **anointed the feet of Jesus.** Anointing his feet showed her humility and worship. Wiping his feet with her hair was a double sign of her humility; she let down her hair in the presence of a man not her husband, violating their custom, but used her hair instead of a cloth to show unusual devotion.

12:4 **Judas Iscariot, Simon's son.** Simon is the most common male name of that period. Some have tried to tie this statement about Judas to the Matthew and Mark accounts (which take place at the home of a man named Simon), but it is more likely that these are separate events than somehow bound by a common name.

12:5 **sold for three hundred pence.** Actually, three hundred *denarii*, or potentially several months' wages. Very costly, indeed!

12:6 **he was a thief, and had the bag.** Not a soft bag, but a money box, probably made of wood. Judas apparently had responsibility for keeping the finances of the group, replenished by faithful disciples as needed, including these women. John/the editor made sure we know that Judas cared not for the poor, in spite of his statement.

12:7 **the day of my burying.** This means, 'the day my body shall be prepared to be put in the tomb.' A dead body would be wrapped in linen soaked in perfumes such as this (though a lesser quantity). She had instead used it now, anticipating his coming death, because "me ye have not always" (v. 8).

12:7 **JST**

John 12:7 KJV	JST
Then said Jesus, Let her alone: <del>against the day of my burying hath she kept this.</del>	Then said Jesus, Let her alone: <b>for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial.</b>

The JST simplifies the language of the verse while also adding the significant note that Mary had "preserved" the perfume used to anoint Jesus for some time in anticipation of this day. In other words, it was not just a spontaneous gesture; she probably saved, then purchased, then guarded it for this very moment (though she may not have known about his impending death at any point in the process but was nonetheless inspired to do it).

### The plot to kill Lazarus – John 12:9-11

12:9 **that they might see Lazarus.** A large crowd had gathered and so knew of Jesus' attendance, but we are told that they came just to see Lazarus. News of his death and resuscitation must have spread broadly throughout the land, so that Passover attendees made a side trip to Bethany to see this living miracle.

12:10 **that they might put Lazarus to death.** As long as Lazarus was there, he was a living testimony to Jesus' power. In their rage against Jesus, they also wanted to get rid of all the evidence of his claims, including this man.

12:11 **believed on Jesus.** The reason for their anger was obvious—people hearing of Lazarus experience believed in Jesus and began to follow after him. This fueled their fear of a rebellion and a Roman reaction.

## The triumphal entry – John 12:12-19 (Matt 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-40)

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John's account of the triumphal entry is much shorter than the Synoptics but adds some unique insights.

12:12 **On the next day.** Or, Sunday during the daylight hours.

12:16 **then remembered they.** Jesus' disciples did not understand the significance of their acts at this time, but after he was resurrected, they more fully grasped the meaning of this event.

12:18 **they heard that he had done this miracle.** John clarified why so many people were on the road anticipating Jesus' coming. The crowd that witnessed Lazarus being raised earlier was running around testifying of what they had seen, telling people Jesus was coming. The people wanted to see the man that could perform such a miracle.

12:19 **Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing?** Or, 'In spite of all of our efforts to discredit him, look what has happened! The whole city is following him—everyone is becoming his disciple!'

## Greeks desire to see Jesus – John 12:20-26

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12:20 **certain Greeks.** This means Greek Jews or perhaps Gentiles who had converted to Judaism but were not circumcised (called 'God-fearers' later in Acts) from Greek-speaking cities in northern Palestine (the Decapolis) or from outside of Palestine living in places like Alexandria, which had the largest population of Jews of any city, or Asia (modern Turkey), Greece, or other places in the eastern part of the Roman empire where Greek was the dominant language. Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew from Tarsus, though he seems to have also been trained and at least partly raised in Jerusalem. Greek-speaking Jews and God-fearers played a huge role in the early spread of Christianity.

12:21 **The same came therefore to Philip.** Philip, whose name is Greek, was from northern Galilee and probably spoke Greek, so these people came first to him, seeking an audience with Jesus.

12:22 **Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.** Following his pattern in the book of John, Andrew came to Jesus seeking to bring someone to him—in this case, the Greek Jews or converts seeking to meet him.

12:23 **the Son of man should be glorified.** The audience for the conversation through v. 36 appears to be these Greeks that Philip and Andrew brought to Jesus. He started by proclaiming that it was time for him to be glorified, meaning to be praised, magnified, or celebrated.

12:24 **if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.** True of wheat seed, it was also a metaphor for what Jesus was about to do—die to bring forth much fruit among the children of men.

12:25 **He that loveth his life shall lose it.** Another example of gospel paradox (or eschatological reversal), which are abundant in John especially.

12:26 **if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.** To “serve” here is the same verb as used with Martha at the beginning of the chapter, extending Martha as the model for those the Father will honor.

## Jesus foretells his death – John 12:27-36a

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12:27 **Now is my soul troubled.** A quote from Psalm 6:4. John has no account of the struggles in Gethsemane; this verse is perhaps a substitute for that time in Jesus' atonement, or at least an anticipation of that event.

12:28 **a voice from heaven.** This is the third instance of the Father publicly testifying of the Son; the other two are the baptism and the transfiguration (which isn't in John).

12:29 **said that it thundered.** It appears that the crowd did not understand the words spoken from heaven but did hear something that reminded them of thunder. Some speculated that it was an angel speaking.

12:30 **for your sakes.** Jesus didn't need the confirmation of the voice from heaven, though his soul was troubled. Rather, the voice was for the benefit of the crowd.

12:31 **the prince of this world.** "Prince" is *archon*, or 'ruler.' It is also used in John 14:30 and 16:11. Paul uses a similar phrase in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 2:2; 6:12. Jewish apocryphal teachings have many references to this title as it applies to Satan (e.g., *Ascension of Isaiah* 1:3; 10:29; and *Jubilees* 10:8; 11:5, 11).

12:32 **if I be lifted up.** Jesus continued to teach them of his coming death, now only days away. But as John tells us, they just didn't understand until it was all over, then it made perfect sense (see John 12:16). Compare 2 Nephi 26:24; 3 Nephi 27:14.

12:32 **draw all men unto me.** "Men" is in italics because it is not in the Greek. Jesus means 'all people,' including women and Gentiles.

12:33 **what death he should die.** Being "lifted up" (v. 32) signified crucifixion but also Jesus' blessing after the resurrection.

12:34 **who is this Son of man?** The crowd referred to Isaiah 9:6-7 and Psalm 89:3-4 in terms of Christ living forever. But Jesus used the phrase "Son of man," so they wondered how Christ related to it. Some believe John included this especially for later disciples who may have been confused by Jesus' use of this term.

12:35 **Yet a little while is the light with you.** Jesus' answer seemed to avoid the question of equivalency and instead went to his point that his time was short.

12:36 **be the children of light.** Jesus invited them to believe in him, the light of the world, and thus become the children of light themselves, averting the hold that darkness would otherwise have on them.

### Prophecies regarding Jesus – John 12:36b-43

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Jesus' presence demanded a choice—was he the Messiah or not? He fulfilled prophecy and did the miracles, but each person was still left with the personal decision.

12:36 **did hide himself.** Once again, Jesus withdrew from the public eye for private time with his disciples, making his triumphal entry and speech to the crowd there, including the Greek Jews, his final public ministry efforts in the gospel of John.

12:37 **so many miracles.** As mentioned in the introduction, John provided seven signs of Jesus' messiahship, four healings and three miracles (some substitute walking on water for cleansing the temple since the latter was not miraculous, so both included here). In spite of this, many still did not believe him.

Healing / Miracle	John ref (approx. date)
Changing water into wine	2:1-11 (winter/spring, AD 26-27)
Cleansing the temple	2:13-22 (spring, AD 27)
Healing the nobleman's son	4:46-54 (spring, AD 28)
Healing a lame man	5:1-15 (fall, AD 28)
Feeding the 5,000	6:1-15 (spring, AD 29)
Walking on water	6:15-21 (spring, AD 29)
Healing the blind man	9:1-41 (fall, AD 29)
Raising Lazarus from the dead	11:1-44 (spring, AD 30)

12:38 **who hath believed our report.** Quote from Isaiah 53:1.

12:40 **that they should not see.** Quoting Isaiah 6:9-10, though John left out the hearing/ears part, which moved from heart to ears to eyes and then back, going from sight to understanding (heart). See also 1 Nephi 12:17; Doctrine & Covenants 112:13.

12:42 **among the chief rulers also many believed.** John noted that even among the leaders of the Jews were found disciples of Christ, only they were secret and fairly shallow disciples for the most part, concerned that open confession of belief would result in their being “put out,” like the blind man that confessed Jesus healed him. These men valued the praises of men more than God (12:43).

## The Father sent me – John 12:44-50

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Jesus he summarized his mission and relationship to the Father: “even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:50). Jesus is the Father's *shaliah*, his ambassador and personal representative. Whatever Jesus said was exactly what the Father would have said if he were there.

12:44 **on him that sent me.** Jesus taught his disciples that to believe in him was to believe in the Father, who had sent Jesus.

12:45 **he that seeth me seeth him.** Likewise, to see Jesus was to see the Father, because he represented him so perfectly.

12:46 **a light into the world.** As the prologue said, the light was more powerful than the darkness (1:5), therefore those who believe in Jesus the light would not be left in darkness.

12:47 **I judge him not.** Reflecting back to John 8:15-16, Jesus explained that judgment was not his mission but salvation for the whole world. Judgment would come later.

12:48 **one that judgeth him.** Tying this to verse 49, Jesus taught that the Father would judge all. Jesus was doing what the Father asked of him, so even if he judged, that actually came from the Father.

12:50 **his commandment is life everlasting.** What the Father tells Jesus to tell mankind brings eternal life, and Jesus speaks nothing else.

## Conclusion

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As Jesus completed his public ministry with the last three signs of his messiahship and teachings that became increasingly clear about his identity and mission, he at once blessed many lives and earned new disciples, while other incurring the anger and animosity of Jewish leaders who feared his leadership among the people. The showdown was set, the confrontation inevitable: it just remained for it to be Jesus' time to give himself as a sacrifice for mankind. But with only hours remaining in his mortal existence, Jesus took the time to teach some profound and holy teachings to his disciples in private, which is the subject of our next lesson.

## Bibliography

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### Abbreviations:

- AT – Author's translation
- BYU – BYU New Rendition
- CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
- ESV – English Standard Version
- JST – Joseph Smith Translation
- KJV – King James Version
- LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
- NASB – New American Standard Bible
- NIV – New International Version
- NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
- NLT – New Living Translation
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
- TNT – William Tyndale 1534 New Testament

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