

# Reconsidering John 11 in the Context of Isaiah 49

by Art Katz

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*Jesus' weeping in John 11:33-35 reveals his disappointment in the sisters' lack of understanding of God's sovereignty and purpose in the death of their brother, highlighting the importance of faith and the glory of God.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 49:4, John 11:33-35, John 11:40-41, John 11:43-44

**Topics:** "Faith in God's Sovereignty", "Understanding Grief"

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## Description

Art Katz explores the profound emotional response of Jesus in John 11, particularly His weeping over the sisters' misunderstanding of death and God's sovereignty, contrasting it with the prophetic insights of Isaiah 49. He emphasizes that Jesus' sorrow stemmed from their failure to grasp the eschatological significance of Lazarus' death, which was meant to reveal God's glory. Katz highlights the need for believers to recognize the deeper purposes of God in their trials, rather than viewing loss solely through the lens of personal grief. He calls attention to the importance of faith in seeing God's glory, as demonstrated in Jesus' powerful command to Lazarus. Ultimately, the sermon serves as a reminder of the greater resurrection hope that awaits both individuals and the nation of Israel.

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## Transcript

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"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (John 11:33). I was drawn to this verse afresh this morning where the author of my devotional reading, Eugene Peterson, Living the Message, May 7, substitutes, "a deep anger welled up within him." One would suppose that Peterson is implying that Jesus was angry at Satan, the Prince of Death, for stealing this young life away prematurely and causing the lamentation and the grief noted.

That "Jesus wept" in v.35 suggests not anger so much perhaps as disappointment at the failure of the sisters to rightly interpret the passing of their brother in the light of the eschatological teaching which had been their privilege at the feet of the Master. He must have felt what was prophesied of Him in Isaiah 49:4,

"...I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain..." ?for His weeping was not as theirs! They wept for what they thought was irretrievable loss; He wept for their weeping--not understanding the sovereignty and purpose of God in the death of their brother.

Should they not have suspected by His inexplicable but calculated delay a purpose in that death in keeping with His previous words to them of His role in Israel's eschatological destiny? "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" That is, that they themselves should see a first enactment of national Israel's own subsequent raising from the dead as described in Isaiah 49 and other texts which He had undoubtedly opened to them. In what lesser thing shall the glory of God be obtained?

Who has not seen the effect of God's word expositied powerfully and as soon dismissed by those affected, the moment a distraction, let alone a calamitous event, comes to displace it! "Said I not unto thee?" Did I not say, verily, verily, I say unto you...? Heaven and earth will pass away, your brother Lazarus will pass away, but My Word shall endure forever. Little wonder then his prayer at the tomb, "Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (v.41). The sisters, God bless them, so expressive of the Church in the totality of its true condition, both rebuke Jesus with identical words: If you had been here our brother had not died.

As if the loss of life is the greatest of all calamities; as if the bliss of an early heaven is not its own reward; as if the issue of flesh and blood and personal concern takes precedence over all other considerations, even the glory of God!; as if Jesus is some 'handyman' to attend their blessing; as if all His previous instruction, found so fascinating, was only a superior form of entertainment of a biblical kind and not to be reckoned on seriously; as if there was no cognizance that "to whom much is given much is required"!

However fickle and shallow the sisters proved, the Father was not deaf to His Son's words for "when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth" a preview, in advance of the time, when the entire nation shall be raised by the same glory of the power of the Father through the obedience of a corporate Son at the end of this age.

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