



## The Death of Death

Jn 11:38-57 | Nic Gilmour | Mar 17, AD2024

*“...thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1Cor 15:57-58)*

1. V38 “Jesus, *once more* deeply moved” (NKJV “groaning in Himself” and cf V33 “groaned...troubled”)
  - a. Empathy (with those grieving V36); indignant (to the scoffers V37)
  - b. Jesus comforts the afflicted, afflicts the comfortable
2. V39/41 “Take away the stone”
  - a. Even wealth cannot stop death.
  - b. The setting: “death’s seeming crown, the gravesite” (Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 680)
3. V39b Martha: “by this time he stinketh” (KJV) – 4 days! Cf contemporary superstition that souls remain near body for 3 days, hoping to return to it.
4. V40 “if you believe, you will see the glory of God” – our foundational hope. See Tom Wright *Surprised by Hope*; Ian McCormack & Richard Drebert *Night Dive to Heaven*.
5. V41 “So they took away the stone.” Our role: aligning our actions with Jesus words.
6. Vv42-43 “I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here...Jesus called out in a loud voice...”
  - a. V42 “YOU sent ME” words emphasized in original language – Jesus (and John) emphasizing His mission to the world.
  - b. We are the only ‘bible’ some of our friends will read.
  - c. Do I know I’m always heard? Answered? (God answer prayer ‘No, Slow, Grow and Go’ by James Greer, Open Doors)
7. V43 “Lazarus, come out”
  - a. “An immovable object meets an irresistible force – Death meets Christ.” (Bruner, *Op Cit*, 681)
  - b. Augustine: if Jesus had not said Lazarus’ name, *all* the graves would’ve been emptied (and see Jn 5:28, Matt 27:51-53)
  - c. Lazarus not the first nor the last resurrection (Jairus’ daughter Matt 9:18-26; widow’s son Luke 7:11-15, Saints Matt 27:52) but powerfully intimate.
8. V44 “The dead man came out...Jesus said to them, ‘take off the grave clothes...”
  - a. What grave clothes do we still have on?
  - b. Importance of community in continued healing
9. V45 “many of the Jews...believed in Him” (the ‘why not’ people!)
10. V46 “But some of them went to the Pharisees” (the ‘why’ people). “Even a sign as remarkable as this will not convince those who are determined not to believe” (Donald Guthrie, in ‘John’; *New Bible Commentary*, 1050)
11. V 48 Sanhedrin: “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will take away both our temple and our nation”



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- a. Irony – they already had Roman overlords (and moreover the occupation of Jerusalem and razing of the temple in AD70)
  - b. Fear based intransigence (and see 12:37-43!); the power-scrapping plight of the semi-autonomous.
  - c. Their position of authority was more important than the supposed blasphemy of Jesus, revealing political motivation.
12. Vv49-52 Caiaphas: “Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and...the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one”
- a. Caiaphas (high priest AD18-36/37) – son in law of Annas (high priest AD6-15, deposed by Romans). Wealthy Sadducee and cunning opportunist. As attested by Jewish historian Josephus the Sadducees were notoriously rude (e.g. see V49 “you know nothing at all!”). Motivated by political expediency, not truth. (In our day, “alternative facts”)
  - b. Craven, political logic. “It is taught: ...like Sheva son of Bikhri...since he will be killed and they will be killed, they shall deliver him to [the Gentiles] and all of them will not be killed.” (*Bereshit Rabbah* 94; ‘The Sefaria Midrash’, 2022, [www.sefaria.org](http://www.sefaria.org); and see also the story of the Maccabean martyrs in 2 Macc 7:37-38)
  - c. Testing prophets: Right word? Right motivation? Fruit of their life? Gracefully shared? For strengthening, encouragement, comfort (1 Cor 14:1-2)?..... if YES to all the above – reflect.
  - d. Role of false prophets who yet speak truths. Moral: God can use even evil for His purposes; see Gen 50:20. Ultimately God *will* draw the “scattered children of God” from the nations to Himself. Global mission!
13. V53 “from that day on they plotted to take His life” – ironic in the context!
14. V54 “Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly...withdrew to...the wilderness”
- a. Was Jesus scared?! Directed by human authorities?!?!
  - b. Role of the wilderness in suffering, sanctification and waiting.
15. Vv55-57 Passover (3<sup>rd</sup> one mentioned in John) – Jerusalem, but “[t]hey kept looking for Jesus” – no religiosity can satisfy our deep spiritual thirst.

### For the Brave of Heart

- Do you see evidence that you’re an ‘eternal being’ – and if so, what is your hope of the resurrection (Jesus’ resurrection, and your own) based on?
- In your life to date, how have you experienced God’s power / sovereignty / providence? With whom have you shared this?
- Tell a friend how this week how you will seek ‘resurrection’ of a hope / relationship / situation.
- Who have you recently served in Jesus’ name by ‘rolling away the stone’ or ‘taking the grave clothes off’?