

## Jesus Wept

### Why Jesus Wept

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As we prepare for the Passover time, it is a time that we focus more on Jesus Christ and the life that He lived as He walked on this earth and the great sacrifice that He made for each and every one of us.

Over the years we have seen many different writings, movies, comments portraying Christ, sometimes as unemotional, detached from all the mayhem. Sometimes they portray Him as on a different plain with really no human interaction, to the point where the humanity of Christ was relegated to the background.

But I think that each one of us realize that this is not true and the Scriptures are clear that He was a man like you and I, that He had close friends and people that He cared about very much. Christ knew happiness and love, joy and laughter, and He knew pain, sorrow, grief, and even crying. And this is what I want to focus on today, that He knew weeping.

There are two occasions in the gospels that speak of Him weeping and one in Hebrews. The first appearance of Him weeping is in John 11:35. This is immediately before Lazarus was raised from the dead. The second appearance is in Luke 19:41, and this is when Christ made His entrance into Jerusalem on the colt and the people that lined the streets rejoicing and praising Him.

**Luke 19:41** Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, . . .

In the very next section, it speaks about how Christ went into the Temple and drove out those who were buying and selling on the Sabbath. So we can see that Christ was an emotional person, and He did care about people and what was going on.

The third appearance is in Hebrews 5 where it states,

**Hebrews 5:7** who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.

Now many of the commentators do believe that this verse is referring to when Christ was in the garden, when He was so distressed and sorrowful. And it is interesting that these times that speak of Christ weeping and His tears are within just the last few weeks of His life. I am sure that there were many tears shed throughout His life, but these are the ones specifically brought out in the Scriptures.

Without a doubt this was the most stressful time in His life and we are able to see more of His emotions as He spoke to the people.

In Luke and Hebrews, a better translation of the word “weeping” is to wail or cry out. But the Greek word used in John 11:35 is *dakruo* meaning to shed tears, which is the only time that word is used.

I want to focus on “Jesus wept.” today. Now the scene of this two-word verse is in the midst of the death and raising of His friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. John 11 is devoted to this story and in fact this is the turning point for the final mission that He had on this earth. This was where Christ began His preparation for the crucifixion.

If we go to the end of the chapter, we discover that the raising of Lazarus is what sealed His fate, because it was this miracle that resulted with the chief priest and the Pharisees gathering a council and officially plotting to kill Him. The primary reason they did that is because they were afraid that He was going to win over the hearts of the people, so they wanted to eliminate Him.

When reading this verse in context, most people look at “Jesus wept” and say why did He weep? The most common explanation people come up with is that He wept because of the death of Lazarus. But that is clearly not the case. He did not weep because Lazarus had died. Jesus had intentionally

delayed His return to Bethany. They told Him that Lazarus was sick, but He did not return until after He knew that Lazarus was dead.

Now at that time there were many types of illnesses that could mimic death, however someone who had been dead for three days and the body would come to decay, there would be no doubt that the person was dead. So this made it certain that this was not a trick or a hoax of mimicking death in any way.

So Jesus did delay His return until after He knew that Lazarus was dead and in the grave for four days. He did also know that He was going to raise Lazarus from the grave and perform this great miracle before the people, the priests, and the Pharisees. So the question is, why did Jesus weep?

There are a few things here that I would like for us to consider. First is the circumstances and the great amount of stress in the situation He was under. Christ knew that His trip back to Bethany was the beginning of this preparation for the crucifixion and His death.

Secondly, on the last trip that He was in the Bethany/Jerusalem area, seen in chapter 10, the Jews took up stones to kill Him. He was able to escape out of their hands. Even the disciples were nervous about their return to the Bethany area.

**John 11:16** Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

So both Christ and the disciples knew the dangerous and hostile environment that they were going back into. So there was a heightened pressure and stress level that was with them at that time.

Like I said, this chapter is primarily about the raising of Lazarus so it takes place in the lives of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Now the relationship that Christ had with this family was more than just a passing friendship. This is a family in which He stayed with when He was in the Jerusalem area. When He stayed there He more than likely ate with them, spent time with them on a regular basis, and when you have the opportunity to live with and have meals with people this is basically a family setting

where it is very casual and there are conversations. And I am sure there were opportunities for deep conversations with Him where they asked questions and He answered them, teaching them and instructing them and even listening to their thoughts, ideas, and hopes and even their difficulties and trials that they were going through. There was an intimacy there which He did not have with other people. Even the Scriptures say that Christ loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

There are only a few places in the Bible where it says that Jesus loved someone specifically. So He was personally close to them, really like a part of the family. Luke 10, verses 40-41, this is Martha speaking to Christ, saying,

**Luke 10:40-41** But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.”

Now that is just like a child coming to mom or dad tattling. This shows the intimate relationship they had. We cannot imagine doing something like that when we are over at someone else’s house for dinner. Can you imagine if I had John Ritenbaugh over for dinner and my sister is there and goes to John and says, “Ted won’t help me.” How do you think he would react?

We only feel comfortable with those that we have an intimate relationship with, like family. So Christ knew them very well, knew them personally. He knew their personalities so He knew how to deal with them individually.

So when Lazarus became sick, their instinct was to contact Jesus. They had no doubt that He could heal him. Now we know that Christ intentionally delayed His return, because He knew that He was going to die and He knew that He was going to raise Lazarus back to life.

If you jump into the scripture in John 11, Martha meets Christ out on the road and the first words she speaks to Him are, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.” and Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise.” He also said to her “I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in

Me, though he may die, he shall live.” She believed Him, but she did not believe that He was going to raise Him up then, she assumed that He was going to raise Him up in the resurrection. Continuing on in verses 32-35.

**John 11:32-35** Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept.

In verse 33 it says that He groaned. Now that is not really a proper interpretation of what the situation was. It was more like He snorted with indignation. He was angry and upset. He was frustrated at their unbelief, and I believe that this was just a reaction.

A few weeks ago we had a Bible study about Isaac and what was brought out was that Isaac could be angry, he had a temper, but he did not stay angry. We can see that in this situation. Christ was angry, but He did not stay angry.

There was no doubt that He was going to raise Lazarus. Perhaps they put limits on their faith and He assumed that through all the teachings that He had given them, that they knew and would fully trust in Him. But they had put limits on their belief and what He could do. They believed that He would heal him, or even perhaps they believed that He would raise him right after he just died, because they had heard stories of others that were raised from the dead. But Lazarus was already stinking, so by that point they did not even consider it. Their mind was not on the same level as His mind was.

Now the next question I have to ask is, why did Christ not react to Martha as He did to Mary? They said the very same thing, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.” When Christ was talking to Martha, He was calm and collected, they had a conversation. But when Mary came to Him and fell at His feet sobbing, it was after this that Christ showed His frustration and He was brought to tears.

Is it possible that knowing both of them and knowing their personalities, He dealt with each of them accordingly? Martha, the more business-minded, asked questions and was less emotional, so He dealt with her in that way, knowing her personality and emotional state. But with Mary at His feet and the way that she reacted and the emotional outbreak that she was displaying to Him, He started with frustration first, but being a gentle and caring person that He was, He had empathy for her.

Is it possible that Christ's emotions of frustrations and stress and the empathy that He had for these people that He loved so dearly, welled up inside of Him? Is it possible that the impact of all of these emotions together was His final release of His tears? Not much different than you and me when we are under stress ourselves. This is possibly why then the people around misinterpreted His tears for Lazarus. Obviously, He did not look angry, but it was a look of caring and concern.

So we see here at the end of Christ's life we have insight into His feelings and emotions. Here in John 11:35, Christ wept over the unbelief of these two people that He was so close to. In Luke 19, we see that Christ weeps over Jerusalem, the city and the people that He loved. And in the garden, He weeps and cries for all humanity which He loved. It is just a crescendo of tears.

In conclusion, just a couple of thoughts here. Have we taken the time to know Christ as intimately as we see in this relationship that He had with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha? On your knees, have you had the deep conversations and asked the questions to get the answers? Have you studied through the Scriptures of the teachings so that we would know Him personally? Have you expressed your thoughts and ideas and difficulties to Him?

We must ask ourselves, do we put limits on the miracles and blessings that He can give us? Do we put a limit on what He can do for us? Then, knowing Christ, and how He knows us and how He knows our personalities, does He not give us what we need in the times of our trials, tests, failures, and our victories?

This two-word verse, “Jesus wept” shows the humanity of Jesus Christ, the Word that became flesh, and the love that He has for each and every one of us.