

## Jesus Wept

### John 11:35 (NASB)

<sup>35</sup>*Jesus wept.*

This is widely known as the shortest verse in the Bible. There are many questions one might ask about this verse and its significance. The basic one is, why did Jesus weep?

First, let's read most of the context around this verse.

### John 11:20-43 (NASB)

<sup>20</sup>*Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house.*

<sup>21</sup>*Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.*

<sup>22</sup>*"Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."*

<sup>23</sup>*Jesus \*said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

<sup>24</sup>*Martha \*said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

<sup>25</sup>*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,*

<sup>26</sup>*and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

<sup>27</sup>*She \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."*

<sup>28</sup>*When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."*

<sup>29</sup>*And when she heard it, she \*got up quickly and was coming to Him.*

<sup>30</sup>*Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.*

<sup>31</sup>*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.*

<sup>32</sup>*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."*

<sup>33</sup>*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,*

<sup>34</sup>*and said, "Where have you laid him?" They \*said to Him, "Lord, come and see."*

<sup>35</sup>**Jesus wept.**

<sup>36</sup>*So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"*

<sup>37</sup>*But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"*

<sup>38</sup>*So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, \*came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.*

<sup>39</sup>*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."*

<sup>40</sup>*Jesus \*said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"*

<sup>41</sup>*So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.*

<sup>42</sup>*"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."*

<sup>43</sup>*When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."*

If we look at the context, we see that this verse comes after verses describing Mary weeping.

<sup>30</sup>*Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.*

<sup>31</sup>*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.*

Mary must have loved her brother deeply. One might say that she was just doing what was expected of her. Weeping was an expected response of Jewish women when a family member died, but it was perhaps unusual for men to display strong emotions like this. However, verse 33 tells us that the Jews with her were also weeping.

<sup>33</sup>*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,*

One might conclude that Jesus was simply responding naturally, since He was fully human, to the emotions of all these people. This family was special to Jesus. Verse 3 tells us that Jesus had a special love for Lazarus.

Verse 2 tells us that Mary was the woman who had anointed Jesus feet and wiped them with her hair. This event is described in **Luke 7:37-38 (NASB)** <sup>37</sup> *And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.*

In Luke 7\*, this anointing event follows the story of a widow of Nain, where Jesus brought her son back to life. Some scholars suggest that John may actually be conflating two or three events, including the stories in Luke 7, into the story about Lazarus. Other than John 11 and 12, the only other place where Lazarus is mentioned is a parable of Jesus in Luke 16:19ff.

In both of these stories, Mary is weeping. Why was she weeping? In the story of Lazarus, it makes sense – her brother has been dead for four days. In the Luke passage, it isn't quite so clear why she was weeping. Perhaps she sensed all the animosity of those around Jesus, perhaps even thinking Jesus was not aware of it. Whatever the reason, it was obvious she cared about Jesus. Could it be that she sensed the inevitable? Did she somehow realize that she was anointing Him for His burial?

So perhaps when John says, “Jesus wept,” Jesus was sensing the sorrow of Mary, in particular, as well as others around Him. He also may have been thinking of Lazarus. His friend has died; most of us would feel sorrow at such a time. But think about it – if Jesus brought Lazarus back to Life, He would be bringing him back from the bliss of heaven into a situation of turmoil, only to die again later.

In addition to all of this, Jesus was aware that the time for His death was approaching, and He knew that this miracle would dramatically increase the animosity of the Jewish religious leaders toward Him. He knew it was inevitable, but just as he delayed His return to Bethany so that He could win more disciples in the area “beyond the Jordan,” (See John 10:40-42) He wanted more time for people to respond to Him.

Another interesting aspect of this event, and in a parabolic way, may have been why John gave us this story, is the picture of Lazarus coming out of the cave where he had been buried, bound up in burial wrappings. Jesus says, “*Unbind him and let him go.*” (John 11:44) It is the picture of the unbelieving crowd, particularly the Jewish leaders, standing around, spiritually dead, bound up in ways that kept them from seeing who Jesus was.

Soon after this, Jesus would make His way into Jerusalem for the last time. Look at the story in **Luke 19:37-44 (NASB)** <sup>37</sup>*As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,* <sup>38</sup>*shouting: "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* <sup>39</sup>*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."* <sup>40</sup>*But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"* <sup>41</sup>*When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,* <sup>42</sup>*saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.* <sup>43</sup>*For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,* <sup>44</sup>*and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."*

As He entered Jerusalem Luke 19:<sup>41</sup>*When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,*

So think about this: the Light of Life, even God Himself, was in their midst, and the religious leaders as well as many ordinary folk could not see it. I think that is the main reason why Jesus wept in both of these instances. He so much wanted them to find salvation, but they wanted something else.

Now notice the ending of the parable about Lazarus in Luke 16. From his place of torment, the rich man pleads with Abraham: **Luke 16:27-31 (NASB)** <sup>27</sup>*"..... I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house —* <sup>28</sup>*for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'* <sup>29</sup>*"But Abraham \*said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'* <sup>30</sup>*"But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!"* <sup>31</sup>*"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

Now someone **has** just risen from the dead, and many people refused to respond to Jesus' call to believe. Moreover, Jesus knows that His death is imminent, and even when **that** happens, many will not respond. Many still refuse to respond today.

God sent the very best He had, His own essence in human form, to be tortured and die in a humiliating fashion, and yet many people would not respond. A multitude of powerful angels stood by and watched this happen. The hearts of heaven were broken. Jesus knew all of this, and he wept.

**\* Luke 7:11-16 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup>*Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.* <sup>12</sup>*Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.* <sup>13</sup>*When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."* <sup>14</sup>*And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"* <sup>15</sup>*The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.* <sup>16</sup>*Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"*