



**John 11:28-37**  
**Why Did Jesus Weep?**

28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you."

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.

31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

32 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."

33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

You may not have known that Esther 8:9 is the longest verse in bible, but I'm certain that most of you know that John 11:35 is the shortest: "Jesus Wept."

But while it may be the shortest it certainly isn't the easiest to properly interpret and exposit. Spurgeon was right when he said: *"There is infinitely more in these two words than any sermonizer, or student of the Word, will ever be able to bring out of them, even though he should apply the microscope of the most attentive consideration."* – Spurgeon

Now you may be thinking at this point, *why?* Why is verse 35 hard to understand? After all, the words themselves aren't hard to understand. We all know what weeping is, tears come out of your eyes and flow down your cheeks. And we can well understand why anyone would weep at the grave of a well-loved friend. Wouldn't you do that? Simple, right?

No. It would have been simple if it said, Martha wept, or the Jews wept, or the Disciples wept, or you or I wept. Because we are all ordinary mortal men and women. But verse 35 says Jesus wept, and He did so just prior to demonstrating that He is, in fact, **not** an ordinary man but the incarnate Son of God by raising Lazarus from the dead. If ever a sad story ended happily it is this one.

Given the circumstances you might expect to read, Jesus smiled reassuringly and said, *"Don't Cry, did I not tell you this sickness is not unto death?"* But we don't read that we read in these verses that Jesus wept and groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. So that's the question I want us to ask today, *why did Jesus weep, why was He so troubled, and what can we learn from that?*

Now you probably remember the circumstances, Mary and Martha, Christ's dear friends send word that their brother, Lazarus, is sick. But Jesus doesn't go to them until four days after Lazarus dies. Martha meets with Him first outside the town, and we have that wonderful declaration of her faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. It's not written down for us, but we should assume that Jesus told Martha to go and call Mary, which she does.

Martha calls her secretly, which means she went into the house and instead of making a great show before the other mourners, whispered Christ's invitation in her ear. Jesus said go and fetch Mary, and went and got her. I wonder are we as zealous to bring our grieving friends and relatives to Christ? Or do we go to them and seek only to comfort them *ourselves*? Oh, but Andy, that's different, he told her, He didn't tell *us* to bring our friends and relatives to Him! Didn't He? Have you read the New Testament?

Anyway, the mourners see Mary get up and they assume that she is going to the tomb, and follow her to continue their own mourning. The interesting thing is that had it been known that she was going to speak with Jesus, they might not have followed her, given that they hadn't followed Martha when she leapt up to go and see Him. At this point Jews from Jerusalem would have heard that they were kicking people out of the synagogue for believing in this man, and many might have been wary. In this way it was assured that all the mourners would be at the tomb and a large group would have been gathered.

Mary goes to Jesus and falls at His feet, and have you ever noticed that whenever Mary is mentioned, she is at the feet of Jesus? and we would do well to learn that is the place for us. Mary says the same thing to Him as Martha, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Both of the sisters understood, because they knew He really was that no one whom Jesus loved could die in His presence. ***But neither of them yet understand, that no one whom Jesus loves will stay dead when he comes to them.***

Mary and the other mourners are overcome with grief, they are all *klaio* – a word that means not just weeping but wailing. And because of that we read that "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Now that word there groaned is *embrimaomai* – it is a word that indicates a groaning from sorrow, it is a groaning from anger, outrage, indignation. And we'll discuss what Jesus is angry about in just a moment.

Jesus asks where they have put Lazarus and they take Him to the tomb and we read there that He wept. He did not *wail* as they did, but tears came from his eyes and visibly rolled down his cheeks so that all who were there saw it. They assumed that it was from sympathy because clearly He loved Lazarus. Some clearly became a little bit indignant. If Jesus had the power to work miracles, then couldn't He have done better? There is more than a hint of accusation here.

But before we get all indignant, let us remember that we've done the same haven't we? When something terrible is happening to us or we suffer a sudden loss, haven't we all grumbled "***Why is God allowing this to happen? If He loves me, why am I suffering?***"

They saw Him weep, but it wasn't for the same reasons they were weeping. We can learn many things from the fact that Jesus was weeping that day.

First, this weeping shows his humanity, he had eyes and tear ducts as we do. He, the Son of God, became man as the Westminster Larger Catechism reminds us, by "taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul." And those tears were not because he had something in his eye that day, but because Jesus has a **reasonable soul** there were intense thoughts and feelings behind those tears.

Jesus wept because Lazarus, his dear friend, had been taken by death.

He wept because he felt the pain that was causing Mary to wail as no one else. You and I, may see someone weep, and we empathize, and cry as a result. One of the many things I love about my wife is that she can't see someone crying and not cry herself. But we do not feel that person's pain. Being the Son of God, Jesus *knew exactly the pain* that Mary was feeling. Christians remember that when you suffer loss, your savior knows your pain: ***Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin***

With Christ it truly was *compassion* - He suffered with them, long before He suffered for them.

But He wept for other reasons:

- He wept, because of the sheer awfulness of it.
- He wept for the terrible consequences of sin in the world.
- He wept because of what death had done to his friend, how it had ripped apart his family, and now how it was causing terrible heartache for those who had loved and lost their dear friend Lazarus and because that was not how it was supposed to be. And he in the best sense, hated that death with a righteous anger. That is why Jesus groans with indignation at seeing what our enemy death has done to us and even then He was preparing for the battle that would ultimately put an end to death:

BB Warfield put it beautifully - ***“It is death that is the object of His wrath, and behind death him who has the power of death, and whom He has come into the world to destroy. Tears of sympathy may fill His eyes, but this is incidental. His soul is held by rage: and He advances to the tomb, in Calvin’s words again “as a champion who prepares for conflict.” The raising of Lazarus thus becomes, not an isolated [miracle],but a decisive instance and open symbol of Jesus’ conquest of death and Hell. What John does for us in this particular statement is to uncover to us the heart of Jesus, as He wins for us our salvation. Not in cold unconcern, but in flaming wrath against the foe, Jesus smites in our behalf. He has not only saved us from the evils which oppress us, He has felt for and with us in our oppression, and under the [power] of these feelings has wrought our redemption.”***

These tears were shed by the one who came because he was moved by the plight of sinners in the shadow of death, who came to save them by defeating their enemy and taking away the curse, because of His compassion, because of His tears, someday God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of those He came to save.

***So let me give you a few words of application:***

**First it is this, Christianity is neither stoicism nor madness.** Christians, learn from Christ how to give expression to your feelings. As Romans 12:15 ***Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*** When your brothers and sisters have experienced a blessing rejoice with them! Do not let envy turn you away in that moment, I have watched so many worldlings be bitter when someone else receives a blessing, “I deserve that” why are they all looking at her, congratulating her, I should be getting the praise. Remember that when one part of the body of Christ is blessed we all are, because we are all part of the same body. So Mr. Eye and Mrs. Ears, rejoice when Mr. Foot gets an unexpected Pedicure!

But when Mr. Foot loses a toe in an accident, mourn with him, and Mr. Toe, do not feel that you have to pretend you are “fine” in that moment. I’ve watched as Christians have felt constrained to act happy at the loss of a loved one. ***“He’s with Jesus, I’m so happy.”*** If Jesus could weep with Martha and Mary for his

Friend Lazarus, even though He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. SO SHOULD YOU WEEP FOR THE LOSS OF YOUR LOVED ONES.

As JC RYLE put it: *“It shows us that it is not sinful to sorrow. Weeping and mourning are sadly trying to flesh and blood, and make us feel the weakness of our mortal nature. But they are not in themselves wrong. Even the Son of God wept. It shows us that deep feeling is not a thing of which we need be ashamed. To be cold and stoical and unmoved in the sight of sorrow is no sign of grace. There is nothing unworthy of a child of God in tears. Even the Son of God could weep.”*

**Second, MUSLIMS and many other false religion worship Gods who do not ultimately care nor are they moved by the suffering of men.** Christians, you worship the God of the bible, and He shows us again and again, that He is not your God and your Savior, He sympathizes with you: ***NKJ Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.***

Therefore as Ryle reminds us: “the Savior in whom believers trust is a most tender and feeling Savior. He is one who can be touched with sympathy for our infirmities. When we turn to Him in the hour of trouble, and pour out our hearts before Him, He knows what we go through and can pity. And He is One who never changes. Though He now sits at God's right hand in heaven, His heart is still the same that it was upon earth. We have an Advocate with the Father, who, when He was upon earth, could weep.”

***Thirdly, We are too accustomed to death, we view it as too normal sometimes.*** Here the Creator shows us better. When the world was *good* there was no death, but now following the fall, there is death and it is part scarring and marring of the universe.

You can become used to death, perhaps even far to familiar with it, so familiar in fact that we sometime forget that death is not good. Jesus came into the world to put an end to it.

In his atoning death on the Cross Jesus triumphed not only over sin and the devil, but over death itself and we read that great good news that when Jesus returns that will be the end of death for good for we read in 1 Cor. 15:27-28 : *“25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”*

But until that day, it remains true that all men have a date with death, and no one expects that day to come. I have never met anyone who called home and said, “Honey, I know you expected me to pick up the kids from piano lessons, but I just checked and my PDA says I never make, it, yeah I get hit head on by a drunk. Yeah, I thought it was next week too.”

How will that day be for you? Are you ready for it? Jesus knew in your natural state no man would be, that is why he came: ***“Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”***

That is why He was made incarnate and born of a woman, why he lived a perfect life, why he suffered a humiliating death on the cross, so that He might work the death of death for all who believe in Him.