

## LAZARUS, THE DEAD MAN (JOHN 11:1-44)

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The beginning of this story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead begins by introducing three of the main characters in this story, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and of course, the primary character being Jesus. Mary, Martha and Lazarus all lived in Bethany, near Jerusalem. Jesus had just left Jerusalem and had taken His disciples beyond the Jordan River. Jesus had just escaped the Jews from stoning Him, in Jerusalem, and He knew that He could not return there until it was the right time. Nevertheless, we are reminded of what Jesus had said earlier, after He had healed the man who had been crippled with an infirmity for thirty-eight years, at the pool of Bethesda. We read, "For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, **"My Father has been working until now [is presently working], and I have been working."** Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus answered and said to them, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."** (John 5:16-19)

So back to our story that is leading up to the raising of Lazarus, while He and His disciples had found a refuge place beyond the Jordan, Jesus is given the message that Lazarus is not well. (There's a message in this for us too, that in every situation, we look to God for His direction and plan.) Jesus then waited two days and then headed for Bethany, which was about a two-day's journey on foot. So, we find in **verse 39** that Lazarus had been dead four days. Knowing that, it can be presumed that by the time Jesus received the message about Lazarus' condition he was already dead or close to it. How does that matter? 1. As mentioned, all things that God does is in His time, not ours. 2. A key element to Who Jesus IS unfolds in this story to make it clear to the reader that it doesn't matter how long one has been dead, as Jesus had stated earlier in **John 5:28-29**, **"ALL who are in the graves will hear His voice [Jesus' voice] and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."** Before anyone gets caught up in the lie that we are earning our salvation, as it is in Christ alone that we are saved, as the same apostle John explains in his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle. "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we **walk in the light** as He is in the light [as HE IS the light], we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:5-7) ...so that we may enter into His perfect and glorious kingdom. That gives us the spiritual side of the meaning to the raising of Lazarus. Not only

does it not matter how long one is dead physically, as all will be raised up at the last trump, likewise spiritually, it doesn't matter how long one had been dead spiritually, what matters is in the present, as God is presently still at work, leading us to believe on Christ, and trust in the One who gives us life spiritually. JESUS!

So now, we will look at multiple themes within this body of text in **John 11. 1. Is the foreknowledge that Jesus had** of not only what would happen to Lazarus but also to Himself. When Jesus was told that Lazarus was sick He replied, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (vs.4) Jesus also then said that He would go and wake up Lazarus. Then his disciples thought that Lazarus was just sleeping to which Jesus then plainly told them that he was dead. Jesus soon after tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again, to which Martha agreed and stated that she believed in the Resurrection. That is when Jesus said "I AM the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (vs. 25-27) Did you catch that? Jesus said "whoever lives AND believes in Me shall never die." What Jesus had said then is in agreement with what the apostle John said that, "if we walk in the light as He is in the light", we are cleansed of all sin and are justified in Christ to be in His eternal kingdom. As it can be said, God is seeking those who are seeking after and wanting HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, to abide in His light. While God already knows, He is letting it play out , so-to-speak, and giving us the choice, of our own fate. Speaking of Jesus' foreknowledge, He already knew why He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Once again, He told His disciples, after hearing of Lazarus' being sick, "that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (vs. 4) So it is for each of us! For us today, we are always to be in hope and believing, as love "believes all things, hopes all things" (1 Cor. 13:7) for the power of God to change lives, to bring forth salvations, deliverances and healings, yet hopefully we are wanting it primarily for the glory of God in Christ, but also of course out of the compassion of Christ for those in need of that! That is then the "Great Commandment" of God to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind and also to love others as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-39) It certainly wouldn't seem like a compassionate thing to do to have Lazarus return from his eternal resting place to this evil and sin-plagued world. But right after Jesus had said "that the Son of God may be glorified through it", He told His disciples that the delay in healing Lazarus was for the disciples to believe. (vs. 15) For God's glory and that one may believe! Jesus was questioned by the disciples about returning to Judea after He just escaped being stoned there by the angry Jews. Jesus then explained somewhat cryptically that He knew He had some time left before it was His time. (vs. 9-10)

The second theme in this passage of text is in **2. the foreshadowing of Christ's death**. Jesus had said that it was so that He would be glorified (**vs. 4**), that Jesus' time to die was approaching but not at the present (**vs. 9-10**). Jesus had already said prior to this event, to His disciples and the Jews, concerning His life, that "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This **command** I have received from My Father." (**John 10:18**) That word "power" that Jesus used is actually the Greek word "exousia" which means authority.<sup>1</sup> Now Thomas had said, "Let us go that we may die with Him," (**vs. 16**) thinking that they were going to witness Jesus' death. Apparently he wasn't listening earlier when Jesus had said that. He certainly didn't understand that Jesus had the power AND authority. It wasn't until Thomas saw the holes in Jesus' hands and in his side that he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (**John 20:28**) That was AFTER witnessing the raising of Lazarus from the dead! A Question that can be asked is, how many of those people that witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead stood up for Jesus' defense before he was crucified? Remember Jesus' parable of the poor Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham and asked that Lazarus would go and tell his brothers to repent who were still alive on this earth. Abraham told him, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' " (**Luke 16:31**) The same goes for Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. Some will believe on the signs and wonders but guess what, some or most will also believe in the beast who does signs and wonders that is spoken of in **Revelation 13**. While this message isn't intended to be a study on eschatology (end times stuff), it is though my intention and God's intention for us to believe on the wholeness of God's Word of which we have the prophesies of Christ in the Old Testament, the teachings and workings of Christ in the New Testament and how together the Word of God complements the Word of God as well as the calling we have from the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, who is leading us to believe on and receive Christ.

Jesus chose to do God's will all the way to the cross. And similar to what was said of Jesus while He was on the cross was said of Him about Lazarus. In this story they said in **verse 37**, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Another foreshadow was that the exact same scenario for the burial of Lazarus was what Jesus would have with the burial clothes and the cave with the stone in front of it. Also, there had been several days (four actually) since Lazarus had died to which his body would normally have stated to decompose. While Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, it was prophesied of Him in **Psalms 16:10**, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." So what does all this foreknowledge of Jesus and foreshadowing of His death really mean? Jesus had said in **verse 4**,

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1 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1849.htm>

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Answer: To demonstrate His power AND authority! He then said in **verse 40**, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" After this story, when Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He said, in **John 15:8**, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." So as Jesus IS glorified, God IS glorified and that believing on Christ and receiving Him we also would give glory to God. In Jesus' prayer (sometimes referred to as the real Lord's prayer) in **John 17:20-23**, just before Jesus was to die on the cross, Jesus prayed, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

So the two most important aspects of this resurrection story as well as the Resurrection of Jesus is that we would **1.** believe and that then **2.** God is glorified. While this may be a fair summation of the overall themes of this text, there is one more that can be brought to light and that is on the issue of trusting in God through obedience. In **Hebrews 5:8-9**, it says, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who OBEY HIM." It appears then from this story that not only was Jesus reinforcing their need to believe on Him, but for Mary and Martha they were being taught to trust in God even in their suffering. While Martha had it right in believing that Lazarus would rise again in the resurrection, she and Mary hadn't quite gotten to the understanding that Jesus IS "the Resurrection and the Life." Then as Jesus and the others got to the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to take away the stone. Then Martha questioned His command by mentioning that Lazarus is going to stink pretty bad. While it is good that we seek the Lord for clarity, to understand His Word, yet it is quite another thing to dispute His Word! Yet, sadly we do as well. That goes all the way back to the garden of Eden, Satan said to Eve, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (**Genesis 3:1**) "You'll be like God", he said! One may say, "God may have said...BUT!" After Martha tried to correct Jesus, He said, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" Then after Jesus acknowledged the Father in prayer He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

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So then, now let's bring this story all together in context of what had been going on prior to this event, the event itself, the events that would follow, Jesus' foreknowledge of all things, the

foreshadowing of what would be, and Jesus' desire to do the Father's will by giving glory to God and bringing in His people who He has called to be His chosen people, that all may believe on Jesus being the Christ, to become one in the Father and the Son. Prior to this story it was said that it was just a matter of time for Jesus to have to die and that He had to escape out of Jerusalem from being stoned. Jesus gets out of town and then has to go back to Bethany which was right by Jerusalem and possibly face some of those same people. His disciples even questioned Jesus on going back. The whole foreshadowing of the raising of Lazarus was not just to get the idea in the disciples' heads about the fact that Jesus too would have to face death, but that as He said, **"I AM the Resurrection AND the Life."** So also, as it was with all of Jesus' I AM statements, **"I AM the Bread of Life" (John 6:35)**, **"I AM the Light of the world" (John 8:12)**, **"I AM the Door of the sheep" (John 10:7)**, **"I AM the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11)**, **"I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6)**, and **"I AM the True Vine" (John 15:1)**. There is no 'yeah but...' that works with what Jesus had said. Jesus was speaking of His divine nature and that He was/is truly One with the Father.

The other objective of acknowledging the power and authority of Christ was mentioned several times throughout the story and that was in the word BELIEVE, and if one does not believe, we looked at the story of the man who went to Jesus to have his son delivered of an unclean spirit. Jesus replied, **"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" **(Mark 9:23-24)** The Lord honored that man's honesty (honos). Honesty is important for us in our communion with God. The same can be said about the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well of Jacob. She even testified to Jesus that the Messiah would come and reveal His truth to His people. Jesus responded, **"I who speak to you AM HE."** **(John 4:26)** Cry out for the Truth, for yourselves and for others, that you can be helped in your unbelief. As Jesus had said that He had the power/authority to lay down His life, He also had the power to raise up again (**"I AM the Resurrection and the Life"**). But even in this perfect illustration, pointing to the death and resurrection of Jesus, of the raising of Lazarus, that was acted out in real life, it was not a parable. Jesus already knew that many of His disciples would abandon Him in unbelief. When Jesus had said that He is the **"Bread of Life" (John 6)** and that one must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood in order to have eternal life, many of His disciples turned away and left Him. Jesus explained though that He was speaking on a spiritual level. "Then Jesus said to the twelve, **"Do you also want to go away?"** But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**(John 6:67-69)**

**What we've gone over the past few weeks, 1.** We all start off in this life blind and ignorant (in unbelief), and then also poor and dead! First we need to acknowledge that. **2.** Oh, that we may believe that HE IS the Christ, the Son of the Living God and that He has full power and authority because of Who HE IS! And He's calling us "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (**1 Peter 2:9**), to "**live and believe**" in Him! There is more to the story in John's account, the two times Jesus groaned in the spirit, within Himself, the plot to take His life after He rose Lazarus from the dead, of which you can read more about. For today, it can be said once again, today is our day of salvation as we are not guaranteed tomorrow. Can we go to Jesus in honesty for His Truth without adding a but...seeking first His kingdom and His Righteousness as Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**? Lastly, "Jesus said to those Jews who **believed Him**, "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" (**John 8:31-32**)