

41. Jesus Heard that Lazarus Was Sick

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children come to understand that the Lord is preparing the hearts of many people to receive the message of the Gospel. The Lord has prepared such individuals so that they are ready to receive the Gospel and place their faith in Christ when the Word is shared with them. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus prepared to return to Judea.

One day, a messenger came looking for Jesus. John 11:1-4 says, “Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’ When Jesus heard *that*, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’” Jesus often visited the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus when He went to Jerusalem. One visit is recorded in Luke 10:38-42. Now, the sisters sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick.

We read that Lazarus was the sister of the Mary that anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. That would happen a few weeks later than the event recorded in John 11. In fact, it would happen just six days before the Passover as we will see in the topic on John 12:1-8. The event of the anointing of the feet of Jesus was probably well known by the early Christians so that is why it was mentioned here.

Mary and her sister Martha knew that Jesus loved their brother Lazarus. As a result, they sent a messenger to Jesus to let Him know that Lazarus was sick. They knew that Jesus had healed many sick people during the previous three years and so they realized that Jesus could heal their brother also. However, the Father had a much greater plan. Jesus had said that He came to do the will of the Father. John 6:38 says, “‘For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.’” In these verses, we are going to see how Jesus carried out the will of the Father.

First, Jesus began by saying, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” In this statement, we see that Jesus stated the purpose of the sickness of Lazarus. The purpose of this sickness was to bring glory to God. We will see that Lazarus did experience temporary physical death at this time but that temporary death only lasted for four days. However, the miracle that Jesus would perform would show, as no other miracle could, that Jesus is God.

Second, Jesus said that this sickness would not produce permanent physical death. It was true that Lazarus would experience physical death for four days. However, Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from physical death. John 11:43-44 says, “Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’” Jesus raised Lazarus back to physical life and he lived a normal physical life for

a period of time before again experiencing physical death.

Third, Jesus said that the Son of God would be glorified through the physical death and raising back to life of Lazarus. John 11:45 says, “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.” In this verse, we see one of the ways that Jesus was glorified by the fact that Lazarus was raised back to life. That miracle caused many to believe in Jesus. However, there was another way that Jesus was glorified as a result of the raising of Lazarus. John 11:49-52 says, “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” It was the raising of Lazarus that caused the high priest to determine that Jesus must be killed. That decision by the high priest led to the fact that Jesus died to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world and the Father showed that He was satisfied by raising Jesus from the dead. That brought great glory to Jesus.

Jesus received the message about the sickness of Lazarus but did not go to him immediately. John 11:5-6 says, “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.” Jesus had a great love for Lazarus, as well as his two sisters. However, that did not cause Jesus to leave immediately for their home. Instead, Jesus chose to spend two more days in the place where He was. That reason is revealed in John 11:39 where we read, “Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days.’” Jesus wanted to make certain that the smell of death would come from the tomb when the stone was removed from the entrance to the tomb. That smell of death would provide the evidence that Lazarus had died and that his body was already beginning to decay in the tomb.

In contrast, Psalm 16:10 says, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Peter and Paul both quoted this verse in sermons to show that the body of Jesus did not suffer corruption. Peter quoted the verse in Acts 2:27. Then, Acts 2:31 says, “He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” Peter made it clear in his sermon that the physical body of Jesus did not see corruption. In Acts 13:34-37, Paul said, “And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David.’” Therefore He also says in another *Psalms*: “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.” Both Peter and Paul made it clear that the physical body of Jesus did not suffer corruption.

After staying in that place for two more days, Jesus said to His disciples in John 11:7-10, “Then after this He said to *the* disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’ *The* disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the

light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Once Jesus gave time for the body of Lazarus to have the smell of death, Jesus was ready to go Bethany to raise Lazarus back to life.

We saw that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters. The town of Bethany was only about two miles from the city of Jerusalem so Jesus knew that word would quickly get to the religious leaders in Jerusalem when He raised Lazarus back to life. However, this was the opportunity to show His love to this family. Jesus knew that this would cause the religious leaders to really begin to plot His death and that was exactly what happened. We saw in the earlier part of the topic that Caiaphas said that one should die for the people. Once the religious leaders heard about Jesus raising Lazarus, John 11:53 says, “Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.” As a result, this became the event that would lead to the crucifixion of Jesus.

The disciples were concerned because they feared that Jesus would be stoned if He returned to the area around Jerusalem. However, Jesus reminded the disciples of a common saying, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Jesus was carrying out the will of His Father and this meant that He was walking in the spiritual light. The religious leaders could do nothing to Him until the time that the Father had set for Him to die for the sins of the people of the world. Jesus had to finish His other ministry first.

The night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden. John 17:4 says, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Jesus had finished the work that the Father had for Him to do before He went to the cross. As a result, Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to pay the penalty for our sins. That was why another part of the prayer of Jesus is mentioned in Luke 22:42-44, where we read, “saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Jesus continued to do the will of the Father even as He prepared for His death. The Father chose to send an angel to be with Him during that time because the Father understood the agony that Jesus experienced as He prepared to carry out the will of the Father.

Jesus was not afraid to go to Bethany because He knew that He was carrying out the will of the Father. He would carry out the will of the Father and complete His work before He went to the cross. In the same way, we want to show our physical and spiritual children that we do not need to be fearful in our own lives as we carry out the will of the Father. The Lord will give us His strength in every situation when we are walking in fellowship with Him moment-by-moment. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children what it means to be led by the Spirit moment-by-moment.