

45. Jesus Raised Lazarus from the Dead

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to show love to those who are in sorrow, especially when there has been a death in the family. We saw that the people noticed that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters because of the fact that Jesus wept with Mary. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus took away that sorrow by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus with Mary, Martha and a large group of other Jews who had come to comfort the sisters. John 11:39-40 says, “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 said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?’ Here, we are told what Jesus said as soon as they arrived at the tomb. He just told the people to take away the stone from the tomb. That sounded like an easy request since there were a large group of people there.

However, Martha immediately spoke. She explained why it would not be a good idea to remove the stone. The words of Martha show that she was a very practical woman who thought about the consequences of choices that people made. Martha just said, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days.” She knew that Jesus was Lord and she had told Jesus a short time earlier that she believed that her brother would be raised in the resurrection at the last day. Those words had been an encouragement to her in this time of sorrow for her brother. That is why she was now able to speak about the practical result of removing the stone. She said that if the stone was removed, there would be a terrible odor because her brother had already been dead for four days.

Jesus also knew that there would be the terrible smell of death because of the fact that the body of Lazarus had already begun to decay. However, Jesus knew that the smell would soon disappear. He also knew that the terrible smell was proof of the fact that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Jesus reminded Martha and all of the others who had followed them of some of the words that He had spoken to Martha when she first met Jesus as He approached the town of Bethany. One of the things that Jesus had said to her was, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

In 1 Corinthians 10:31, we read, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” In this verse, we see that the Lord wants us to do everything in a way that will bring glory to God. Christ wanted to teach that important lesson to His disciples and other followers like Martha and Mary. That is why Jesus said that if Martha would believe that she would see the glory of God. The word translated “would see” means *to look at or behold*. This word is used in Luke 21:27 where we read, “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” In this verse, Jesus said that the whole world would see Him when He returned to the earth at the end of the tribulation. Jesus said that Martha would see the glory of God if she believed. We will see that what Jesus would do just a few minutes later would cause Martha to see with her own eyes the glory of God.

As a result, John 11:41-43 says, “Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me.’ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’” Here, we see that the stone was removed from the entrance to the tomb where the body of Lazarus had been placed. The moment had arrived for Martha to see the glory of God as she saw what Jesus would do as a sign for His disciples.

Since the purpose of this miracle was to be a sign to the disciples and the others who saw or would later hear about this miracle, Jesus first gave a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father for what the Father would do to show that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus began this prayer by saying, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.” Jesus often spoke of His relationship to the Father and this was one of the things that upset those who rejected the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. An illustration of this rejection is given in John 10:30-31 where we read, “‘I and My Father are one.’” Then, the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” Jesus wanted to clearly demonstrate that this miracle happened because of His relationship to the Father.

Jesus knew that the Father always heard Him. However, Jesus also knew that many of the people who were standing there that day did not truly believe in their hearts that Jesus is the Son of God. As a result, these words of thanks to the Father for what He was going to do were important to help the people who were standing there that day come to a true belief of the fact that the Father had sent Him. John 20:30-31 explains, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” Jesus wanted the people that day to believe in Him and receive Him so that they could have eternal life. He also wants all that read these words to believe and receive Him so they can have eternal life.

After thanking the Father for what He was going to do, Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” There was a very important reason why Jesus used the name of Lazarus as He gave this command. Earlier, Jesus had said in John 5:26-29, “‘For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His 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.’” This was not the time for all the people who were in the graves to hear Jesus and come forth as He exercised this authority. That time is still future. However, it was time for Lazarus to come forth and be raised back to the physical life which he had before he died four days earlier.

We go on to see the result of the authority of Jesus as He cried with a loud voice to Lazarus. John 11:44-46 says, “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.’ Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.” When Jesus said, “Lazarus,

come forth”, at that instant the smell of death disappeared and Lazarus came walking out of the tomb.

However, the body of Lazarus, including his arms and his legs, were wrapped with graveclothes. His face was wrapped with a separate cloth because that was the normal way of the Jews to bury a body. He was unable to remove these graveclothes because he was on the inside of them. Jesus had performed the miracle that no one else could do. Then, Jesus gave a command to Martha, Mary and the other people who were there. By doing this, Jesus gave the people there that day the opportunity to participate. Jesus just told the people, “Loose him, and let him go.” The people followed the instruction of Jesus and set Lazarus free from the graveclothes. We see that this miracle produced two very different results in the lives of the people who saw Lazarus come out of the tomb.

First, we see that many of the Jews that had come to comfort Mary believed in Jesus because of this miracle, which Jesus had just done. As we saw earlier in this topic, the purpose of the signs that are written in the book of John was to help all who read this Scripture in the future also believe. Many people believed in Jesus that day because they saw this miracle. Jesus had earlier given a promise in John 5:24 which says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” Those who believed that the Father sent Jesus received everlasting life. They no longer had to fear eternal judgment. Instead, they had passed from death unto life.

In contrast, we see a very different response from the second group of people who were there that day. John 11:46 says, “But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.” This group of people saw the very same miracle. They knew that the smell of death had disappeared as soon as Jesus spoke the words, “Lazarus, come forth.” However, they did not believe. Instead, they went to tell the Pharisees what Jesus had just done. We will also see in the next topic that the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council and made an important decision that day. John 11:53 says, “Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.” This is a reminder that every person must make a choice.

Each individual also has to make the choice whether to believe in Jesus or to reject Jesus. Those who believe in Him, His death, and His resurrection, and receive Him will receive the gift of eternal life. Those who choose not to believe in Jesus and His death and resurrection will experience the eternal judgment promised in John 5:28-29 quoted earlier in this topic. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly from the Word of God this choice that every person faces. As they share the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will convict of sin, righteousness and judgment; the Father will draw; and the Son will seek and save. Those who make the choice to believe and receive Jesus are given eternal life and no longer face judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to clearly explain to others how to receive eternal life.