

The Death and Resurrection of Lazarus

Part 1

John 11:1-19

John 11:1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

- This “Bethany” was about two miles east of Jerusalem on the south-east slope of Olivet. (Acts 1:12). See notes Jn. 11:18.
- This is not the same as the Bethany beyond [on the east side of] the Jordan. (Jn. 10:40).

Jn. 10:40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

John 1:28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- The best reading in John 1:28 is “Bethany” referring to the “Bethany” on the east side of the Jordan river.
- Some manuscripts have “Bethabara,” but “Bethany” is the better reading.
- There were two villages known as “Bethany” - one on the east side of the Jordan river and the other on the west side of the Jordan.

1. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. (Jn. 11:3, 19, 21, 23, 39).
2. He was not to be confused with Lazarus the beggar. (Lk. 16:20).
3. He was mentioned only in John, but his sisters are mentioned in Luke 10:38-42.
 - a. John reveals in his gospel the very close relationship Jesus had with this fine family.
 - b. Luke’s account makes no mention of this closeness.
4. Lazarus was the same name as the Hebrew name “Eleazar” meaning “God has helped.”
5. This account was omitted by the Synoptic gospels, but this has no significance.
 - a. The writers of the gospels did not always record the same miracles, discourses, parables, etc..
 - b. Much of the gospel of John is unique from the other gospels.
 - c. For example only John records Jesus at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, the account of the woman at the well, the healing of the man who had been crippled for 38 years and the healing of the man born blind. (Jn. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9).
6. The Synoptic gospels give two examples of Jesus raising dead.
 - a. Jesus had raised the daughter of Jairus. (Matt. 9:18,19, 23-25; Mk. 5:22, 23, 35-43; Lk. 8:41,42, 49-56).

b. He had also raised the widow's son at Nain. (Lk. 7:11-17).

1) Luke only recorded this miracle.

2) The fact Luke alone recorded this miracle does not make it untrue.

c. The order of the three resurrections seems to be this: (1) the widow's son at Nain (2) Jairus' daughter (3) the raising of Lazarus.

Note:

1. The raising of Lazarus was one of three miracles Jesus performed in Judea recorded by John in this gospel. (Jn. 5:2-9; 9:1-7; 11:38-44).

2. John recorded four signs Jesus performed in Galilee in his gospel. (Jn. 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 6:1-14; 6:16-21).

John 11:2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

- "ointment" is from "muron" [moo **rahn**] meaning "a perfumed oil or ointment." See Jn. 12:3.
- John 12:3 gives more details about this ointment.

John 12:3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

1. John records this about Mary before the actual event.

2. This is called proleptic reference. The adjective "proleptic," from the noun prolepsis, "speaks of an event before it has actually occurred.

a. John did not make a mistake.

b. John assumed his readers already knew about Mary's humble act of kindness, and was explaining to his readers that this was the same Mary.

c. He did not make a mistake in the sequence of the events.

3. This humble action of Mary is recorded in John 12:3-8.

a. The Jewish leaders were not present in John 12.

b. Jesus was at the home of Martha and Mary (Jn. 12:3) - not in the home of the Pharisee. (Lk. 7:36).

c. Mary is never presented as a sinful woman, but as a humble and kind woman who loved and followed Jesus.

4. This is no evidence that this Mary is to be identified with the sinful woman mentioned in Luke's gospel. (Lk. 7:36-50).

a. The sinful woman in Luke 7 was not named and her home was not mentioned.

b. Mary of Bethany was a devoted follower of Christ who was never identified as a sinful woman.

John 11:3 So the sisters sent word [by a messenger] to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

1. "Lord" can be translated "Sir" as it is in John 4. (Jn. 4:15, 19).
2. Here it means more than "Sir," but has the meaning "Lord, Ruler."
3. "Love" is from "phileo" [fee leh oh], but the word for "love" in John 11:5 is "agapao" [ah gah pah oh].
 - a. The same two words are used to describe the Father's love for His Son. (Jn. 3:35α; 5:20φ).
 - b. They seem to be pretty much synonyms as used in the gospel of John.
 - c. God has the highest love for His beloved Son.
4. The word "love" is used several times by John in this chapter. (Jn. 11:5,11, 36).
5. It should be pointed out that these sisters did not specifically ask Jesus to come to the rescue of Lazarus though they were expecting it.

Note:

1. Some believe Lazarus is the beloved disciple mentioned in John 13:23, but this theory lacks the support of the scriptures.
2. The beloved disciple was, however, the apostle John. (Jn. 13:23).
3. He is the one who ate the last supper with Jesus, wrote the gospel of John and stood near the cross. (Jn. 21:20; 21:24; 19:26,27).

John 21:20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following {them;} the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

John 21:24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

John 19:26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He *said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

John 19:27 Then He *said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own {household.}

Jesus Reveals End Result Of Sickness

John 11:4 But when Jesus heard *this* [the message of the sisters], He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

1. Lazarus would die, but this would not be the end of Lazarus.
2. Jesus would raise him and this would result in God being glorified. See also Jn. 9:3
3. Jesus would later glorify God and Himself by His own death. (Jn.13:31).

Jn.13:31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

4. Jesus would be glorified in two ways by raising Lazarus from the dead.

a. He would receive praise from all the witnesses and all who accepted that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.

b. He would also receive glory by all who later accepted the fact Jesus died for them.

1) Because He raised Lazarus the Jewish leaders plotted to kill Jesus and eventually had Him crucified.

2) They had no idea the effect of Jesus' crucifixion would have on many throughout the ages. (Jn. 12:32,33).

John 12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

John 12:33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

(3) "All" is a hyperbole meaning "many." It should not be taken literally. (Matt. 7:13, 14).

5. Jesus here called Himself "the Son of God." (Jn. 12:3). See also Matt. 26:63; Jn. 8:54; Matt. 16:16, 17.

Jesus Had Great Love For Lazarus And His Two Sisters

John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

1. Jesus had an immense love for this family.

2. The word "love" here is "agapao" [ah gah **pah** oh] and is the verb form of the noun "agape" [ah gah **pay**] meaning "love."

3. It has the same meaning as "phileo" [fee **leh** oh] in John 11:3.

4. It is believed Martha was likely the older sister since Martha was usually listed first (Jn. 11:5, 19; Lk. 10:38; 12:2), but not in John 11:1.

Jn. 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Jn. 11:19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning {their} brother.

Lk. 10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

John 12:2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining {at the} {table} with Him.

5. It appears from Luke 10:38 that the house belonged to Martha.

Jesus Delayed Two Days Going To Lazarus

John 11:6 So when He heard [from the messenger] that he was sick, He then stayed two days *longer* in the place where He was.

1. Some believe Jesus deliberately delayed going to Bethany that Lazarus might die.

- a. This is very unlikely.
 - b. Lazarus was probably already dead when Jesus was told Lazarus was sick. (Jn. 11:17).
 - c. Jesus often delayed immediately doing what He was asked to do. (Jn. 2:3-5; 7:3-10).
2. It is later mentioned that Lazarus had been dead four days when Jesus arrived at the tomb of Lazarus. (Jn. 11:17).

John 11:17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

3. Here is the probable explanation of the four days. (Jn. 11:17).
 - a. The first day was the day He received the message about Lazarus. (Jn. 11:3).
 - b. He waited two days before going to Lazarus. (Jn. 11:6).
 - c. The day of travel to Bethany was on another day - the 4th day. (Jn. 11:7, 17, 39).
 - d. The following verse shows Jesus was not in Judea when he heard Lazarus was sick. (Jn. 11:7).
4. Lazarus very likely died later on the same day the sisters of Lazarus sent for Jesus.

John 11:7 Then after this [two day delay] He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

1. This was the place where the hostile unbelieving Jews were trying to kill him. (Jn. 10:31, 39).

John 10:31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

John 10:39 Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp

2. Jesus' destination was Bethany near Jerusalem in Judea.
3. It is not known where Jesus was when He received the message about Lazarus except He was not in Judea.

Response Of Disciples

John 11:8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"

1. The disciples were afraid of the hostile Jews who wanted to kill Jesus. (Jn. 10:39).
2. It seemed crazy and suicidal to return to Jerusalem.
3. They were also afraid for their own lives. (Jn. 11:16).

Words Of Jesus

John 11:9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day [light]? If anyone walks in the day [light] , he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. See Jn. 9:4

1. Light helps prevent physical stumbling in the day.

2. Light is a great blessing if utilized.
3. Light is the time to walk, and He would now walk to Bethany regardless of the consequences.
4. Those who follow Jesus “the light of the world” will be saved.

John 11:10 "But if anyone walks in the night [spiritual darkness], he stumbles [sins], because the light is not in him."

1. Those walking in physical darkness frequently stumble.
2. Those walking in spiritual darkness without Jesus “the light of the world” will constantly stumble [sin].
3. To overcome spiritual darkness one needs Jesus “the light of the world.” (Jn. 8:12; 9:5).

John 11:11 This He said, and after that He said to them [the disciples], "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

1. Jesus spoke of Lazarus as “our friend.”
 - a. Jesus was close to Lazarus and his family.
 - b. The pronoun “our” sets forth the disciples were also close to them.
 - c. We too can be friends of Jesus by loving and obeying Him. (Jn. 15:14).

Jn.15:14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you."

2. It is plain from the next verse they did not understand Jesus’ statement “Lazarus has fallen asleep.”
3. The disciples believed he was literally asleep and would awaken. (Jn. 11:12).
4. Sleep is sometimes used as a euphemism for death. (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13).
5. Jesus will awaken all His disciples who are dead at the last day. (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Disciples Respond

John 11:12 The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

- “He will recover” literally means “he will be saved.” NIV has “he will get better.”
- “sozo” [**soh** zoh] here speaks of salvation from the physical death he had experienced.
- He is not speaking of salvation from sins since both the good and the evil will be raised from the dead. (Jn. 5:28, 29).
- All will be raised from the dead regardless of the way they have lived. (Acts 24:15).
- Lazarus would later die again, and be raised in the last day.
- He was an exception to Hebrews 9:27.

Heb 9:27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this {comes} judgment,

1. The disciples thought Lazarus was literally asleep.
2. They were optimistic he would “recover” [get well] especially if Christ visited and blessed him.

John 11:13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

- “literal sleep” is literally “the sleep of slumber.”
1. They did not understand Lazarus was dead because they had misunderstood Christ’s metaphor for death.
 2. Jesus would proceed to inform them that Lazarus was dead.
 3. The all-knowing Jesus was fully aware of the passing of Lazarus, but did not immediately reveal it to the apostles.

Jesus Speaks Again To Disciples

John 11:14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,

- “plainly” means without using the metaphor “he has fallen asleep.” (Jn. 11:12). “parresia” [pahr ray see ah] means “plainly, clearly, boldly before all.” (Mk. 8:32; Jn. 10:24; 7:24).
- He ceased using symbolic language, but clearly affirmed Lazarus was dead.
- Jesus again manifested His supernatural knowledge. (Jn. 1:48; 4:17, 18; 6:15).

John 1:48 “Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

John 4:17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus *said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband';

John 4:18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

John 6:15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

1. Jesus did not take pleasure in this plain and unpleasant announcement.
2. He had a great love for Lazarus, and was very saddened by his death.

John 11:15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there [in Bethany], so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

1. Jesus does not clearly state what He planned once He arrived in Bethany.
2. It will soon be revealed that He would raise Lazarus from the dead and this would lead them to have great faith in Him and to glorify God.
3. “for your sakes” is a reference to the fact they would witness the resurrection of Lazarus and would have the most

powerful and convincing evidence possible that Jesus was truly God's Son.

4. The words "I am glad" have been misunderstood by some or many.
 - a. Jesus was not happy His friend Lazarus had died, but He was "glad" in the sense He would use this sad occasion to strengthen the faith of His disciples.
 - b. They already had faith, but their faith would become greater.
 - c. He would use the death of Lazarus to bring glory to the Father and Himself. (Jn. 11:4).
 - d. This miracle had a powerful effect on men then and now.

Thomas Speaks

- Thomas did not receive much emphasis in the Synoptic gospels.
- He is, however, given special prominence in John's gospel. (Jn. 14:5; 20:24-29; 21:2).

John 11:16 Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to *his* fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

1. It is interesting that Thomas who is known for his doubting, rather than Peter, who takes the lead here.
2. This verse refers back to John 11:7-8 where Jesus declared they were going back into Judea.
3. Thomas is ready to die with Jesus, and he exhorted the other disciples to be of the same mind set.
4. Later he was not so eager to die when they arrested Jesus, but fled the garden of Gethsemane with the rest of the disciples.
5. John brings out the fact that Thomas was also called in Greek "Didymus" meaning "twin."
 - a. John referred to Thomas as the "Twin" several other times in this gospel. (Jn. 20:24; 21:2).
 - b. Both the Aramaic and the Greek means "twin."
 - c. "Didymus" was the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic word "Twin."
 - d. The name "Thomas" is the transliteration of the Aramaic word for "twin."
6. Nothing is known about the gender or person of his twin, and it vain to speculate.

Jesus Finds Lazarus Dead

John 11:17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

1. Lazarus had been dead and in "the tomb four days."
2. As already stated, Lazarus likely died the same day Jesus received the message Lazarus was sick. (Jn. 11:3).
3. Burial of a person was not usually delayed, but it usually occurred the day of the death. (Acts 5:6, 10).

4. There is an interesting rabbinical tradition dated in the early part of the third century.
 - a. It was believed the soul hovers by the grave or tomb for three days in hope of reunion with the body.
 - b. The soul would depart at the first sign of decomposition.
 - c. There is no evidence this was a 1st century belief or “four days” mentioned in verse 17 was referring to that belief.
 - d. This uninspired tradition is not a Bible doctrine.

John 11:18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;

1. Technically Bethany was 15 stadia from Jerusalem.
2. A stadion measured 6063/4 feet which was a little less than two miles [9101.25 feet], but the NASB translation is sufficiently accurate - “about two miles off.”
3. This Bethany was on the west side of the Jordan.

John 11:19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother.

1. Jesus was not the only one who loved this marvelous family.
2. The text indicates they were loved by “many of the Jews.”
3. They were doing what Paul exhorted Christians to do. (Rom. 12:15).

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

4. They had been mourning from the time of Lazarus’ death- “four days.” (Jn. 11:17).
5. Mourning normally lasted 7 days according to Jewish custom. (1 Sam. 31:13).

1 Sam 31:13 They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days

6. The words “many of the Jews” shows not all the Jews were hostile to Christ and His followers.

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