

“I Am the Resurrection and the Life” (Jesus in John 11)



Part 13 of the series – Three Years That Changed the World

“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So, the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” (John 11:1-3)

- ✓ Although Lazarus is not the main focal point of this story (Jesus is) let’s understand who he is, where he lived, and who Mary and Martha are:
 - ❖ This Lazarus is only mentioned here in John 11 and John 12
 - ❖ Lazarus is a shortened form of the Hebrew name Eleazar which can mean “God has helped”, or “helped by God”.
 - ❖ Mary and Martha are sisters and Lazarus is their brother
 - ❖ The village they lived in was called Bethany and located in the region of Judea
 - ❖ All three (Lazarus, Mary and Martha) had a close relationship with Jesus
- ✓ The sisters, being deeply concerned for Lazarus, sent word to Jesus



“Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, “Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.” And in that place, many believed in Jesus.”
(John 10:40-42)

- We know from John 10 that Jesus was on the other side of the Jordan River (the region of Perea) and it would have taken a day for word to reach Jesus about Lazarus' condition
- Jesus (in his omniscience) already knew of the serious illness that Lazarus faced. This was no surprise to him.

“When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” (John 11:4-7)

- ✓ There were a total of 4 days that passed before Jesus went to the location where Lazarus was. By the time Jesus arrives – Lazarus had already been dead.
 - ❖ 1 day for word to reach Jesus by messenger
 - ❖ Jesus stayed in the region of Perea for 2 additional days
 - ❖ 1 day for Jesus to travel to Bethany in Judea

- ✓ Jesus knowing what he was going to do (raise Lazarus from the dead) declared that himself and God were to be glorified through this, and the time of his arrival had nothing to do with Lazarus and everything to do with God’s plan.

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- ✓ Why did Jesus wait so long to reach Lazarus:
 - ❖ To strengthen the faith of Mary and Martha by allowing them to trust him
 - ❖ To ensure Lazarus was truly dead
 - ❖ To allow for a miracle to take place (something that the witnesses there had never seen before)
 - ❖ To operate under God’s timetable and not man’s
 - ❖ To allow for Jesus and God to receive the glory

- ✓ Jesus and his disciples return to Judea

“But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light” (John 11:8-10)

- ✓ While it was true that going back to the region of Judea would have placed Jesus in a potentially dangerous situation:
 - ❖ *“Again, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” (John 10:31-32)*
 - ❖ *“Again, they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.” (John 10:39)*
- ✓ Jesus wasn’t concerned as it wasn’t his time to be killed

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- ✓ **Jesus did not fear danger for he knew the will of the Father and obeyed:**
 - ❖ In the “spiritual realm”, when one lives (“walks in the light”) by the will of God, he is safe. *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (I John 1:7)*
 - ❖ Jesus contrasts “walking in the light” with walking in darkness (having no light). To walk in darkness is dangerous. *“If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth” (I John 1:6)*

*“After he had said this, he went on to tell them, **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”** His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” **Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep**” (John 11:11-13)*

- ✓ Jesus had a purpose in going to visit Lazarus for he was going to raise him from the dead not wake him from a deep sleep
 - ❖ The disciples misunderstood what Jesus was telling them “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep” (natural sleep)
 - ❖ Jesus knew full well that Lazarus was dead and that he would raise him from the dead (something the disciples would witness) to bring glory to God and to confirm himself to be equal with God (only God can raise someone from the dead).

“So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.” But let us go to him.” Then Thomas (also known as Didymus said to the rest of the disciples, ***“Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (John 11:14-16)***

- ✓ The lesson here is simple; had Lazarus not died, the disciples and all who read this story would have missed the opportunity to have their faith quickened (broadened/accelerated) for this miracle is something only God can do.
- ✓ The purpose (***“so they may believe”***) was that Lazarus’ resurrection from the dead would do far more to strengthen the disciples’ faith than a stand-alone healing would have done.
- ✓ Thomas (true to his character) believed in Jesus with the utmost of sincerity that he was willing to go to Jerusalem to even die with him.

Jesus arrives at the Tomb of Lazarus



“On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.”

(John 11:17-19)

- ✓ Bethany was approximately 2 miles east of Jerusalem
 - ❖ On a negative note - being this close to Jerusalem put Jesus at risk by those who opposed him and wanted to have him killed
 - ❖ On a positive note – being this close to Jerusalem, and the apparent popularity of Lazarus and his family (they were probably a prominent, influential and wealthy family), brought many people who came to comfort as well as mourn the family's loss. Those people would witness one of the most powerful and undeniable miracles yet performed by Jesus

“When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” (John 11:20-27)

- ✓ **Mary was the quiet, reserved and contemplative sister.** *“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said” (Luke 10:38-39)*
- ✓ **Martha was the busy and more active sister.** *“But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” (Luke 10:40)*

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- ✓ Martha was not rebuking the Lord for failing to prevent Lazarus’ death but simply expressing her broken heart mixed with the grief of losing her brother
- ✓ It seems (based on what Martha says) that she had complete confidence that Jesus had the power to heal Lazarus. The thought of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead may not have even crossed her mind.
- ✓ Regardless, Martha believed something good would still come from this loss

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- ✓ Jesus clearly meant (given his omniscience/all knowing power) that Lazarus was going to be resurrected immediately.
- ✓ Martha, on the other hand, misses the whole point of what Jesus just said. She, of course lacked the full insight and all-knowing power that Jesus possessed.
- ✓ Her response; “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” showed her belief that Jesus would raise her brother in the future, but Jesus had other plans, something Martha wasn’t privileged to know but would soon witness.

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✓ This is the 5th of the seven “I Am” statements (deity claims of Jesus) in John’s Gospel

1. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)
2. “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12)
3. “I am the door/gate” (John 10:7)
4. “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11)
5. **“I am the resurrection and the Life”** (John 11:25)
6. “I am the way, the truth and the life”(John 14:6)
7. “I am the true vine” (John 15:1-5)

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- ✓ Jesus is declaring the factual claim that those who believe in him will live, even if they die physically, because Jesus will raise (those who believe in him) on the last day (the resurrection unto life).

*“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but **raise them up at the last day.** For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have **eternal life,** and **I will raise them up at the last day.**” (John 6:39-40)*

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- ✓ Martha affirms her faith in the Lord Jesus and publicly declares it so
- ✓ This is the whole purpose for why John wrote his Gospel account:

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
(John 20:30-31)

“After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.” (John 11:28-31)

- ✓ Mary seemed equally interested in having a private conversation with Jesus and probably had similar thoughts where she wondered if things might have been different had Jesus arrived earlier. Jesus (given his all knowing/omniscient abilities) may have sensed a similar need (like Martha) to engage with Mary and asked for her by name.
- ✓ Jesus had not entered the village of Bethany and those who were there to comfort Mary and Martha noticed that Mary had departed and perhaps was going to the tomb to mourn her brother Lazarus and as such followed her.

“When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Where have you laid him?” he asked. *“Come and see, Lord,”* they replied. *Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”* But some of them said, *“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”* (John 11:32-37)

- ✓ Mary raises the same issue as her sister Martha – “if you had only been here my brother would not have died”. She also lacked the knowledge of what Jesus planned to do.
- ✓ Mary was passionate and reverent in her feelings, yet like her sister Martha, her faith, though sincere had its limits. She didn’t know what she didn’t know but once she witnesses the resurrection of her brother from the dead – her life will be forever changed.
- ✓ Jesus was deeply moved and equally concerned for the tragic consequences of sin that ultimately brings death – something that could have been avoided as far back as the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie of the devil and disobey God.

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- ✓ Jesus’ tears were two-fold:
 - ❖ His genuine love for Lazarus
 - ❖ His grief over the relentless and deadly effects of sin in a fallen world
- ✓ Note the “mockery” in the statement; *“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying”* which was clearly coming from those who opposed Jesus. However, they were about to witness a demonstration of divine power over death as Jesus raises Lazarus to life!

Jesus at the Tomb of Lazarus



Where a miracle is about
to take place



“Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” (John 11:38-40)

- ✓ Tombs were usually located outside the village so that the living would not become ritually defiled by coming in contact with a dead body (Numbers 19:16). They were typically cut out of limestone making a cave in the side of a wall of rock.
- ✓ A large stone would be placed over the entrance to the tomb for the purpose of sealing the tomb keeping grave robbers and animals out.
- ✓ When Jesus asked for the stone to be removed (so everyone could witness the miracle about to take place), Martha and the others were fearful of the smell of the body (Jews didn't embalm the corpses) as it would now be in a state of decay

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- ✓ Martha, probably in a state of despair, received a gentle rebuke as well as a promise of hope from Jesus.
- ✓ Rather than focusing on her brother's body, she need only put her trust and faith in the one who would not only raise Lazarus from the dead but would one day raise Martha and all who believe from the dead!
- ✓ The purpose of raising Lazarus from the dead extended beyond seeing Lazarus alive again. This was a sovereign act of Christ, designed to glorify himself and the Father by putting his resurrection power on full display to not just Martha and the others at Lazarus' tomb but to all who read John's Gospel.

“So, they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” (John 11:41-42)

- ✓ The granting of Jesus’ request would give clear evidence that he had been sent by the Father causing the people to believe.
- ✓ This was a public affirmation of the purpose of Jesus coming to the earth, to be born, to draw those who believe unto himself, to die for the sins on mankind making atonement (at-one-ment) for those who believe in him, and to raise himself from the dead which ultimately conquers the plague of death and creates a way for those who believe, to experience eternal life, forever being in the presence of God.
- ✓ Jesus chose not to heal Lazarus of his sickness but chose instead to raise him to life (after being dead for 4 days) so as to bring glory to himself and to the Father.

“When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go” (John 11:43-44)

- ✓ It is in this moment that Jesus calls Lazarus back to life and immediately Lazarus walks out of the tomb
- ✓ This captured the attention of all who were present at the tomb of Lazarus
- ✓ There was no longer a need for the grave clothes (strips of linen and cloth) and Jesus commands they be removed.
- ✓ Those who came to mourn their friend Lazarus became part of the “sign” and witnessed the undeniable miracle that Jesus performed that day.
- ✓ John draws the curtain on the scene of this miracle and now the narrative turns to those who willfully choose to disregard the power and authority of Jesus. Instead of submitting to Jesus they set in motion a plan to reject him and have him killed

The Plot to Kill Jesus

John 11:45-57

“Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation” (John 11:45-48)

- ✓ The bold revelation by Jesus “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (as was the case in his other claims of deity) produced two responses:
 1. Some (many of the Jews) concluded (in this case after witnessing the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead) that Jesus must be the Messiah and they trusted and believed in him.
 2. Others (those who didn’t believe) were confused, hardened in their hearts, and refused to believe.
- ✓ They (the religious leaders) needed to find a way to silence Jesus for good

“Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. So, from that day on they plotted to take his life.” (John 11:49-53)

- ✓ Caiaphas declares that either Jesus dies, or the nation perishes for Rome had no interest in another Jewish revolt (as happened when the Jews were controlled by Greece).
- ✓ Ironically, the Romans will massacre the Jews in AD 70 when Emperor Titus destroyed Jerusalem, destroyed their temple and scattered the Jews throughout the known world.
- ✓ Unknown to Caiaphas, God intended a different outcome than what Caiaphas prophesied. While Caiaphas intended to preserve the power of the Sanhedrin by seeing to it that Jesus would be killed, the reality became, as God intended, that salvation would come (through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ) to (all who believe) not only the Jews but the Gentiles.

“Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.” (John 11:54)

- ✓ Jesus knew that the Sanhedrin was plotting to have him arrested and ultimately killed but it wasn't in God's timing quite yet. There was still more for Jesus to do.
- ✓ We know that Jesus (in his omniscience or all knowing power) could discern for himself as to what the Sanhedrin was up to. However, many scholars conclude that Nicodemus and or Joseph of Arimathea (both members of the Sanhedrin) may have been sympathetic to Jesus and probably leaning in the direction of believing in him.
- ✓ As such, Jesus took the appropriate action to not allow his life to be taken any sooner than the divine plan of his Father
- ✓ Jesus relocated to a village called Ephraim (4 miles northeast of Bethel and about 12 miles from Jerusalem) and stayed there with his disciples.

*“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the festival at all?” **But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.**” (John 11:55-57)*

- ✓ This would be the third and final Passover celebration mentioned in John’s Gospel (John 2:13, John 6:4)
- ✓ Jerusalem would have already been crowded even before the Passover celebration began – some estimate that more than a million people packed the city during this time.
- ✓ There was keen interest by those who were there for the Passover. Some were genuinely interested, some would start out with interest and then fade away, while others (those hostile to Jesus) would unite together and cry out – Crucify him!