

The Gospel of John

Do You Believe?

John 11:21-27

INTRODUCTION:

The entire episode of Lazarus' sickness, death, and resurrection was orchestrated by the perfect plan of God. You see, Jesus understood and completely followed God's plan. Unlike the disciples, Mary and Martha, and even us, He saw things from a divine perspective. He was waiting on the correct timing from God. He did not work on man's schedule or by human understanding.

Think of all of the things that had to line up in order for this miracle to have the outreach that it had. This miracle would be performed at a very strategic place and time just prior to the Passover. The **precise place** was Bethany. A small village just two miles east of Jerusalem on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. God chose this precise place for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to be living for this miracle. The **precise time** was just before the Passover, while the road was literally filled with pilgrims heading to the Jerusalem. This miracle will take place in a very public area with a massive number of eye witnesses because the funeral has attracted this huge crowd of Jews. Everybody there is going to become an eye witness to a resurrection. They are going to see Lazarus, whom they were mourning his death only minutes earlier, now walking among them and talking to them. Their sorrow would immediately change to extreme surprise and joy! So everybody coming that way would have heard the story about Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus. They are going to tell their story far and wide and it will circulate throughout the whole city of Jerusalem. There are literally going to be dozens and dozens, if not hundreds of eye witnesses to this miracle.

God also used this miracle to force the powers in the temple and the leaders of Judaism to press the issue of the execution of Jesus because He was having way too much influence on their followers. This was necessary because the time had come for Jesus to be crucified. He was going to be crucified in just a week.

You see, this is how the timing of God works. It always works to perfection. This would never had unfolded this way if Jesus had simply healed Lazarus upon Mary and Martha's request based their timing. Or if Jesus had listened to the disciples who wanted to stay in Bethany where John the Baptist had started his ministry. Many were believing. Why stop a good thing? They felt going back near Jerusalem would be certain suicide because the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus.

The story not only shows how the timing of God works, but it also has a purpose. The purpose is first mentioned in verses 4 & later in verse 40.

John 11:3-4 (NASB)

³ So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard *this*, 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.**”

The resurrection of Lazarus evidenced Christ's glory in three major ways:

A. It pointed to His deity.

This was always the purpose of the miracles. It was to confirm that what Jesus was teaching was of God. Miracles were events that could not be performed by man. They could only come from God.

B. It strengthened the faith of the disciples.

His resurrection gave a preview of the resurrection of Christ, which helped them to believe that it could happen because they had seen His resurrection power in the case of Lazarus.

C. It led directly to the cross.

Jesus was glorified on the cross because He accomplished what we could not do for ourselves. He wiped away our sin that separated us from God. Without the cross, there would be no resurrection. Without the cross, there would be no salvation. And without the cross, there would be no hope for eternal life in the presence of God.

Verse 40 shows us the reason the Son of God was to be glorified.

John 11:40 (NASB)

⁴⁰ Jesus *said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

It was for the same reason that John wrote his Gospel. “*but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*”

The glory of Jesus was shown in order that we may **believe**. That will be the focus of our message this morning. I want to focus our message this morning on verses 21 - 27. This is the high point of the chapter. This is the essence of what is being conveyed in this miracle.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 11:21-27 (NASB)

²¹ Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” ²³ Jesus *said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha *said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. **Do you believe this?**” ²⁷ She *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; **I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God,** *even* He who comes into the world.”

Prayer

BODY:

I. THE DELAY.

Lazarus was someone that Jesus really loved. He is going to raise him from the dead for His glory and the glory of God. So in verse 15 He says to the disciples...

John 11:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”

Despite the reluctance of the disciples to return to the Jerusalem area. Jesus says "Let's go, guys". The disciples were always struggling with faith, weren't they? "O ye of little faith. Why don't you believe?"

Yes, they believed in Him. Yes, they had affirmed that He was the Christ, the Son of God, but they needed to be strengthened in their faith. It wasn't just that the disciples would believe, but that Mary and Martha would have their faith strengthened, and that many Jews who actually eye witnessed the resurrection would also believe. . And then down in verse 45, many Jews who came to Mary and got the whole story of the resurrection first hand, and were eyewitnesses of the living brother, believed in Him. This is a glory display that'll produce faith, and it'll also produce hostility that drives Him to the cross right on schedule.

Then in verse 16 we meet Thomas. He doesn't say much, but he's well-known for being a pessimist and a doubter.

John 11:16 (NASB)

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

This is not a cowardly pessimist. He didn't say, "Let's get out of here or we will all die with Him." He said, "Let's go and die with Him." This man has great faith. Jesus had taught him "If you want to come after Me, deny yourself. Take up your - "what?" - **cross** and follow me." It might cost us our lives. But let's go.

He probably thought that this was going to be the end. They were all going to die. But if they were going to die he wanted to die following Jesus.

So Jesus arrives in Bethany #2. Mary heard that Jesus was coming and ran to him. As she reached Jesus, she told Him what had plagued her brain for the four days.

John 11:21 (NASB)

²¹ Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

Did she know He had healing power? Sure. She has no question about His ability to heal the sick because He did that virtually His entire ministry. She did believe that not only could He heal the sick, but He would definitely have healed Lazarus from His sickness because He loved Lazarus.

But Jesus healed strangers, strangers to whom He had no connection, no relationship. Surely, His love would have compelled Him to heal Lazarus, but instead of being there and being able to do that, He had left. So she knew He loved him. She knew He was capable of healing his illness, but her faith comes short of considering that He could raise him from the dead. That was because he had been dead four days.

John 11:39 (NASB)

*39 Jesus *said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, *said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."*

There was no doubt that Lazarus was physically dead. If Jesus had only been there. But then there's kind of a little window of hope in verse 22.

John 11:22 (NASB)

22 Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

What's that? Listen, Martha knows who she is talking to. She says, "Lord," in verse 21. Go down to verse 27.

John 11:27 (NASB)

*27 She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."*

Jesus had no doubt stayed at their home many times. So she had been taught directly by Him. She has a good understanding of Christ. She understands that He is the Messiah. She understands that He possesses the nature of God. She understands that He is the Son of God. She understands that He came from heaven into the world. She also understands that He has submitted Himself to the will of the Father, and only does what the Father wills Him to do. She understands that the Father will grant anything to Jesus that is consistent with His will.

II. THE PROMISE.

Jesus responds in Verse 23.

John 11:23 (NASB)

*23 Jesus *said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

Martha had not considered that Jesus was actually going to raise Lazarus from the dead in front of their eyes. So she reveals a little more of her theology.

John 11:24 (NASB)

*24 Martha *said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

She has not only got a good understanding of the person of Jesus but she also has a good understanding of the last day. She knows there is a future resurrection. This is, in a real sense, a very disciplined woman because all of this had to have come from Jesus. She had no doubt heard the Lord teach that He would raise the dead.

John 5:28-29 (NASB)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

I just want to affirm to you that Martha was correct. There will be a resurrection. You will receive a body for eternity. You will rise to life or damnation.

III. DO YOU BELIEVE?

John 11:25 (NASB)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

Jesus does not say "I will be." He says I **what?** "**I am.**" He doesn't say, "I can raise the dead." He says "**I am the resurrection**".

So here is this great claim, this claim to be the **I am**, to be the one who is the source of life. I am the embodiment of life. **I am life.**

With that in mind, however, the next verse presents somewhat of a problem.

John 11:26 (NASB)

²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Lazarus had believed in Jesus, yet he had died, as countless of believers in Christ have died since. Clearly when Jesus spoke of believers never dying, he was not referring to physical death. Jesus was speaking of our spiritual life that we enjoy in this life as well as the next. We receive that spiritual life when we are reborn in Jesus and receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Death, then, represents living without God's spirit. In other words, even if we die physically, those of us who are alive in Christ will never spiritually die.

The story of raising of Lazarus thus not only points us towards the resurrection by which Jesus conquered **physical death**, it also symbolizes his victory over **spiritual death** that separates unbelievers from God in this life and the next.

Jesus is everlasting life. That everlasting life in heaven is for anyone who believes.

Do you believe? That's the compelling question. If you do not believe that He is the resurrection and the life, you are without excuse. Why? He created everything that lives. You must believe He is the resurrection because He not only raised the dead, but He himself was raised from the dead; and because He lives, we live also.

He is the first fruits of all who slept. He is **the** one who has come through the grave and out the other side and won the triumphant, glorious resurrection to eternal life for all who believe in Him.

Do you believe? There's plenty of evidence to believe. He is the Creator of everything that exists, and if He can create out of nothing everything that lives, then raising bodies out of nothing is just what He does, just who He is.

Do you believe that He is the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that He is the Messiah who came down from heaven, the Son of God, the Savior of the world?

Martha believed. Listen to her testimony.

John 11:27 (NASB)

*²⁷ She *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”*

She believed. That is the path to salvation. She didn't even know about the cross yet because He hadn't died. She didn't know about His resurrection yet because it hadn't happened, but she believed everything that had been revealed up to that point. She is an Old Testament believer. I do believe! I do believe!

That's the question for everyone here. Do you believe? If you do not believe it is not because there is no evidence. The evidence is massive. His power is about to be displayed before all of these eyewitnesses with the raising of Lazarus from the dead and in just a few short days His power and deity will be displayed in His own resurrection from the grave. After His resurrection, He appeared to the apostles and many other people. He appeared to 500 brethren all at once in one place.

CONCLUSION:

When Lazarus died, he was in the grave for four days. But in this sermon series, he has been there for 21, it is time to get him out.

John 11:39-44 (NASB)

*³⁹ Jesus *said, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, *said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus *said to her, “**Did I not say to you that if you BELIEVE, you will see the glory of God?**” ⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may **believe** that You sent Me.” ⁴³ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”*

When Jesus called to Lazarus, Lazarus emerged from the tomb—not a zombie or half-dead. There is no indication that even the smell of death and decay remained. Such is the power of Christ.

What was the results of this miracle.

Lazarus was alive. The faith of the disciples was strengthened. Mary and Martha had their faith strengthened. The Jews who were eye witnesses believed and many of the pilgrims who heard about the resurrection believed.

John 11:45 (NASB)

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

This miracle was for us also. Do you believe?

This is the Day.