

The Gospel of John

The Resurrection of Lazarus

John 11:37-44

INTRODUCTION:

Open your Bible to John chapter 11. Jesus told the disciples in verse 14 that Lazarus was dead. When Jesus arrived in Bethany in verse 17, Lazarus had been in the grave for **four days**. But in this sermon series, partially due to the corona virus, he has been there **63 days**, and we need to get him out!

Throughout the text of John's gospel, we repeatedly discover that the intention of everything that he records is to demonstrate the deity of Jesus Christ. And he points to His miracles as proof.

John 10:37-38 (NASB)

³⁷ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

This miracle took place because Martha believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. What led her to believe that? The words of Jesus supported by the works or miracles of Jesus. He claimed to be the Messiah, the Christ. He claimed to be the Son of God, deity in human form. He claimed to be the one who came down from heaven and supported it with powerful, miraculous works, impossible for humans to do. In fact, the works that Jesus did were unique only to Him, and He empowered His disciples for a short period of time to do those same works, giving testimony to the fact that they were the true apostles of the Savior Himself.

What happens next is astounding.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 11:37-44 (NASB)

³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

³⁸ So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, *came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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.”⁴⁴ The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Prayer

Why does He raise this man from the dead? This miracle would strengthen the faith of His disciples. There were no explanations for the works that He did other than the fact that He was Christ, the Son of God, the one who came down from heaven.

He also did the raising of Lazarus to give a preview of His own resurrection, which would come only in a few days. Lazarus may well have been raised on the Wednesday before Passion Week. So it would have been a week and a half before He had raised Himself from the dead.

He also did the resurrection of Lazarus to demonstrate a promise that all men everywhere will resurrect on the last day.

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.

This is a demonstration of the power that He will use to raise your body and mine which will be in worse shape than Lazarus' if He doesn't come in our lifetime.

We finally come to verse 37.

In this message I will introduce you to five "P's".

The first is **perplexity**.

BODY:

I. THE PERPLEXITY.

John 11:37 (NASB)

³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?”

Certainly, these are people who have been there for four days. they had sent a messenger to Jesus at the very time Lazarus was sick, and He didn't come. It took the messenger one day to deliver the message to Jesus. Jesus He waited two days. Then it took another day to arrive in Bethany. That's four days. If His love for Lazarus was as great as it seemed couldn't He have healed whatever this illness was and prevented his death? Why didn't He come?

There is a **perplexity** here, and it is an understandable perplexity, given what they have seen from him in His three years of ministry. Of course, from Jesus' viewpoint, He operates within the Father's purpose, doesn't He? He knows exactly what's going on. The timing is absolutely perfect. God does all things after the according to His own timing and will. He doesn't have to tell us the plan. He doesn't have to tell us the duration.

John 13:7 (NASB)

7 Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.”

The disciples lived in that "but you will know" world. They couldn't figure out what Jesus was doing. Especially when it came to His unwillingness to take over and set up an earthly kingdom. But the time would come when they would understand, when He instructed them after His resurrection.

So it's a matter of divine timing. He knows that. He already knows that this is for the glory of God. God is going to be glorified. He is going to be glorified. So He knows a resurrection is going to happen. The Father has disclosed that to Him. He knows that is the plan. They don't, and they are naturally perplexed.

II. THE PROBLEM.

Well that then leads to, I guess, what you could call a problem. There is a **problem**.

John 11:38 (NASB)

38 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, *came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

So Jesus was deeply moved within again. This is an insight into the true heart of God toward unbelief and judgment. He came to the tomb. It was a cave, as it often was in that part of the world. If you would go there today, you would be shown a cave that is identified as Lazarus' tomb. You can go down deep into this cave. Inside are carved flat places where they can lay bodies. There is no door. In front of the opening is a groove that a circular stone could be rolled into just as the scriptures describe the tomb of our Lord.

So that is what was in front of Jesus when He arrived.

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.”

Here comes the problem. Jesus was asking to have the stone rolled away from the opening. Now, the stone served a purpose. It was supposed to keep out animals and the people who might raid the contents of the tomb. But it also kept the stink in, because the Jews did not embalm. They just wrapped the body, wrapped the hands, wrapped the feet, wrapped the head in a cloth, and sprinkled spices on it, and got it in the grave. And decomposition happened very rapidly. Within four days, it would have been oozing green liquid, and the stench would've been nauseating. This is a problem.

So Martha says, “**By this time, there will be a stench for he's been dead four days.**” This is natural doubt. Jesus had just told her, “**Your brother will rise again**” back in verse 23, but she had not yet understood that Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead.

Then we are given a **promise**. This is not a future promise. This is going to happen now!

III. THE PROMISE.

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 one thing to believe Jesus when He proclaimed "I am the resurrection and the life" and to say "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even He who comes into the world.*" But to experience that reality was entering into a whole new realm.

The promise was "**If you believe, you will see the glory of God**". They were not going to see God's glory as a shining light, they were going to see His glory as life itself through a miracle. Take your eyes off of the stinking corpse, put them on Christ, and watch Him display His glory.

When you really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you see Him display His glory throughout all of your life. If you are looking and believing, you will continuously see his glory in **your** life. You will see God in circumstances. You will see God working His purposes in your life.

That is what He is asking Martha to look for.

We have seen **perplexity**, then a **problem**, then a reiterated a **promise**, and then there is **prayer**.

IV. THE PRAYER.

John 11:41-42 (NASB)

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.”

So they remove the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and thanked His Father for hearing His prayer. He was not asking the Father to give Him the power to raise Lazarus from the dead, He already had that power. He was just thanking Him for allowing His glory to be displayed.

He speaks loudly so that everyone can hear. He is praying publically for the benefit of the people, not for the benefit of God, who is already in perfect agreement about what is going to happen. If He had not said these words so everybody could hear, the crowd may not have given God and Christ the appropriate glory for this event. They were not going to be able to attribute this miracle to any other power.

That leads us to the **power** in the final two verses.

V. THE POWER.

John 11:43-44 (NASB)

⁴³ When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.”

⁴⁴ The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

He cried out with a loud voice and said, “Lazarus, come forth.”

Can you imagine the pounding hearts? The **peering** into the darkness of the tomb trying to detect movement?

“The man who had died came forth” Talk about an understatement. No fanfare. Just matter of fact. But this is God, and for Him, a resurrection is easy.

This is divine power on display. The kind of divine power that stops the progress of decay. Divine power that pours new life into rotted organs and causes a bloodless decomposing heart to start beating and pumping fresh new blood to every organ and every limb. The kind of power that takes sightless, decomposed eyes and gives new tissue, new nerve, and new vision. The kind of power that takes a non-functioning, decomposed mass of brain tissue and recreates it so it can think, and feel, and move, and speak. It is staggering power over a man who has been dead four days.

When Lazarus was resurrected, the power of life surged in his body. **Imagine this:** he was bound hand and foot with wrappings. Now, how do you come out if you are bound hand and foot with wrappings and your face is wrapped with a cloth? What do you do? Was he hopping? Perhaps each leg was wrapped separate so that he could move. I don't know. But I do know he had new life and the tomb gave up its dead. Can you imagine the overwhelmed minds as this wrapped package comes walking through the door of the tomb?

This is a foreshadowing of the resurrection of Jesus as well as the resurrection of all mankind when Jesus comes again. We could say with the apostle Paul...

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (NASB)

⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death could not keep Jesus in the grave. And death cannot keep us in the grave. Jesus is **The Resurrection and the Life!** Christ resurrected and stood as the conqueror of sin, death, and Satan.

And He says, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

It would have been kind of interesting to volunteer for that assignment. Was his flesh going to stink?. Was it going to show decay? Was his resurrected body going to be exactly like real life? Jesus used people to do what people can do after He's done what only He can do. You remember, He created food, but the disciples passed it out. Here, He creates life, but the people do what they can do. He alone can save sinners. But we can roll away the stones to let the truth in. We can unwrap the new believer.

CONCLUSION:

When Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life,” He was claiming to be the source of both. There is no resurrection apart from Christ and there is no eternal life apart from Him. Beyond that, Jesus was also making a statement concerning His divine nature. He does more than give life; He *is* life, and therefore death has no ultimate power over Him. Jesus bestows this spiritual life on those who believe in Him, so that they share His triumph over death.

1 John 5:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Believers in Jesus Christ will experience resurrection because, having the life Jesus gives makes it impossible for death to defeat them.

1 Corinthians 15:53-57 NASB)

⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The grieving Martha wished that Jesus had arrived earlier so He could have healed her brother. And when Jesus spoke of resurrection, Martha assumed He was speaking of “the resurrection at the last day.” In both statements, Martha reveals that she considered time an insurmountable obstacle. In effect, Martha was saying, “It’s too late to help Lazarus (the time is past), so now we must wait (allow more time).”

Jesus shows that neither **death** nor **time** is an obstacle to Him. It is one thing to *claim* to be the resurrection and the life, but Jesus proved it by raising Lazarus, who had been dead four days. Truly, with Christ, death is but “sleep” Death has no dominion over Him who is Life itself, nor does death have dominion over those who are in Him. Because He lives, we live. Because He is Life, we have life eternally.

Jesus’ statement that He is the resurrection and the life provides a godly perspective on several spiritual matters. Martha believed that the resurrection is an event. Jesus showed her (and us) that the resurrection is a Person. Martha’s knowledge of eternal life was an abstract idea. Jesus proved that knowledge of eternal life is a personal relationship. Martha thought victory over death was a future expectation. Jesus corrects her, showing that victory is a present reality.

After presenting Himself as the resurrection and the life, Jesus asks Martha an all-important question: “Do you believe this?” May Martha’s answer be ours as well:

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.”

This is the Day.