

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 11: The Resurrection of Lazarus



**Describe a time when you've been very sick,
perhaps the sickest of your life.**

Into the Word

- How would you describe Jesus' relationship with this family (vv. 1-5)?
- Why does Jesus deliberately delay (v.6)? Why is Jesus returning to Lazarus at this time (vv. 11-15)? What do the disciples fear instead (vv. 8, 16)?
- What do you learn about Martha from the way she talks with Jesus in verses 21-27? How does Jesus stretch her faith by his claim in verse 25?
- How is Mary's greeting (v. 32) like and unlike Martha's? Since Jesus knew he was going to raise Lazarus (11:11), how do you account for his weeping (vv. 33-35)?

Into the Heart

- Have you ever felt like God was not listening when you prayed? How did you deal with this? How does the way in which Jesus postponed his response to the sisters' request help you in understanding your own prayer life?
- When have you been faced with a tough situation that ended up stretching your faith? What would have been different for you if the struggle had simply been avoided?
- Have you ever attended a funeral where there was no sense of eternal life? How did you go away from that experience? What difference does the hope of eternal life make for you?
- What are some "old grave clothes" that still must be shed for you to feel truly free in Christ?

What is your greatest takeaway from this passage?

What specific life changes do you need to make?

How will you hold yourself accountable?

THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS (John 11:1-45)

ON THE ROAD TO GLORY (John 11:1-5)

In this story we learn about Lazarus, Mary and Martha, three of Jesus's closest friends. The siblings lived together in a home, possibly an inheritance house, in Bethany about two miles from Jerusalem. It's likely they were a wealthy and notable family. The fact Mary will "waste" a day's wage of "pure nard" to perfume Jesus' feet (John 12:3) showed their wealth, not to mention how "many Jews from Jerusalem" came to pay their respects (John 12:19) revealed their notoriety. Jesus stayed with Lazarus, Mary and Martha during his final week on earth. The name Lazarus means "God is my help."

TIME ENOUGH BUT NOT TOO MUCH (John 11:6-10)

Now we come to a troubling part of the story. It's clear from the sister's message that they assumed Jesus would immediately come to Bethany. But Jesus stayed didn't do that. He stayed put...for two more days. Why? Perhaps Jesus knew what he was going to do (resurrect Lazarus). Perhaps he wanted to make a resurrection miracle more impressive. Or maybe Jesus just does things on his own terms and time. The delay is welcomed by the disciples though. They don't want to return to Judea. They fear for their lives.

THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT QUIT (John 11:11-16)

One of the more interesting twists on words in the New Testament is how death is described. In Jesus' time, Jesus introduced a new concept for death: "sleep." He said Jairus' dead daughter is only sleeping (Matthew 9:24) and now stated Lazarus was just sleeping. After Jesus' resurrection the apostles and early church continued this novel idea. Death wasn't an end. Life wasn't over. The person was just "sleeping," waiting for his final resurrection. When Stephen was stoned to death, Luke said he "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60) When Paul taught the Thessalonians about the dead, he said they were asleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13). When he informed the Corinthians of those who witnessed Jesus' resurrection, he noted how some had now "fallen asleep" or died (1 Corinthians 15:7) and that all who died had "fallen asleep."

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING (John 11:17-19)

Jesus arrived in time to find the typical Jewish funeral was in full operation. Typically, in Palestine, a dead body was dealt with quickly. For centuries leading up to Jesus, funerals became more extravagant, particularly for the rich. The body was anointed with expensive ointments and spices, then wrapped in fancy garments. The body was deposited in a tomb cut into rock, with valuable treasures surrounding it, and a rock to seal it from theft. An ancient Jewish funeral lasted seven days, the first few with the body remaining in the house. No one could eat meat or drink wine in front of the dead, and no food could be consumed in front of the dead. There was no study or worship in the house. Friends and family would come to pay their respects, to mourn and wail loudly. In fact, professional mourners were often hired to insure a "loud" funeral. The fact Lazarus had a house and was being buried in a tomb gives some indication, once again, to his social status. He had enough money for his own private tomb.

THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS (John 11:20-46)

After Jesus raised Lazarus, he likely remains at the home. In fact, the Jewish Passover is coming up and we know Jesus lived with Lazarus, Mary and Martha during his final week on earth. It's a wonderful tale about a good man raised to life by the GOD-MAN. Because we all know you can't a GOOD MAN down. Not Lazarus. Not Jesus. Nor even you and me.