

Bi132 The Gospels I

Lesson Bi132-38 Lazarus Raised

Have you ever been disappointed? We have all experienced this emotion, but the more important question is how you responded to that disappointment. The greatest disappointment is the death of a loved one. It can be easy to blame others for such a death, like a doctor or someone else who could have helped. In this story, a family loses a brother to death. Before he died, they called on Jesus for help, but he arrived after the funeral. It seems he was late on purpose.

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from the village of Bethany, and the brother of Mary and her sister Martha. This was the same Mary who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent this word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

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 Mary and Lazarus. 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."

"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. 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 spoke about his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

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. Let us go to him."

Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was three kilometers (two miles) from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 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."

After she had declared this, she went home and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here and asking for you," she said. This was a significant description to be given by a woman. The rabbis would not teach women, but Jesus taught them frequently. When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 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.

When Mary saw Jesus, 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. The Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

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 "there will be 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?"

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."

Then 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." Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done (John 11:1-46).

This is the account of what may be the greatest miracle Jesus did during his entire ministry. Only two others were raised from the dead by Jesus, a young man and a teen-aged girl. The raising to life of Lazarus would be the final event to propel the Sanhedrin to accuse Jesus before the Roman authorities.

This story falls into three parts. The first deals with the death of Lazarus. When word came to Jesus about Lazarus, he delayed going because he already knew that his friend would live again. The disciples were confused. They were thinking only about themselves and Jesus returning to a place so close to Jerusalem. With unbelief they feared the possibility of their own deaths. They still didn't understand the need for Jesus to be the sacrificial lamb for human sin.

In the second part, Jesus meets separately with the two sisters of Lazarus. They each expressed their dashed expectations that Jesus would heal their brother. Yet Martha had hope for an immediate resurrection if Jesus would ask his Father. She was a woman of faith. Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again. She believed in a distant future resurrection. But then to Martha Jesus first entrusted the message of comfort linked to the great "I AM"—a significant revelation of Messiah. "I am the resurrection and the life." When someone believes in him, they will continue to live forever, even after their death on earth. Because God became man, he understands our human sorrow. He joined this family in their grief. Only after ministering to them did he go to the cave where Lazarus was buried.

The third part of the story deals with the raising of Lazarus and the response of those who saw it. After the stone was removed, Jesus thanked his Father for hearing him. He said this for the sake of the people so that they would believe God had sent him. He wanted this miracle to confirm to the crowd that he was their Messiah. Jesus called Lazarus by name to come back. Jesus had the power to raise all the dead buried in Jerusalem, but he called only one believer. Jesus told the bystanders to remove the grave clothes, and set him free. Through this they would know Lazarus was a real human being, not a ghost. Only Jesus sets people free from sin, and now he demonstrated power over death as well. The crowd had two different responses to this event; some responded with faith, others with a plan to betray Jesus to the Jews.

This story is **important** because it shows that for believers, God's timing is perfect. God knows the needs of his children and will meet those needs at exactly the right time.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus alone has the ability to conquer death for every one of his disciples, because he alone is the resurrection and the life.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Jesus say was the reason for the sickness and death of Lazarus?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told the disciples, "It is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it," you are correct.
2. What sorrow did the sisters of Lazarus express to Jesus when he arrived after the death of Lazarus?

A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said they told Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died,” you are correct.

3. What did Jesus say was the purpose of his prayer before he called Lazarus out of the tomb?

A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus prayed for the benefit of the people standing near, that they would believe that God had sent him, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story and tell it to someone who does not know it. Then ask this question, “Jesus took the death of Lazarus and turned it into an opportunity to confirm to the village of Bethany that he was the Messiah. Does Jesus still do the same sort of things today, turning sorrow into joy?” Do you have a testimony of Jesus working in this way in your life? Share it with this person.