**Lazarus Raised from the Dead – The Power Over Death**

*John 11*

**Introduction**

1. John explains the purpose of his gospel record, and the miracles recorded in it – **John 20:30-31** – ultimately manifest that Jesus is the Son of God that we may believe and have life.
2. However, in each miracle there are many things to observe which all serve the ultimate purpose of revealing Jesus’ true nature, and thus the ability to give life.
   1. They teach us something of the nature of His power, and the characteristics of it.
   2. They tell us of His character, and His relation to us.
   3. They tell us of His desires for us, and His ability to bring us to that end.
   4. The miracles confirm what Jesus reveals about Himself, but truly are themselves a revelation of Jesus.
3. **John 11** records the 7th and final miracle of Jesus in John’s record of His ministry. It gets to the heart of who He is, what He offers, and what He can do for us.
4. Jesus’ demonstration of power over quality, distance, time, quantity, nature, and darkness all culminates in His power over death, claimed in His statement, ***“I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25)***, and demonstrated in raising Lazarus from the dead.
5. The Miracle
6. The Death and Divine Purpose (**vv. 1-16)**
   1. **(vv. 1-3)** – Jesus was in Perea, in the town of ***“Bethany beyond the Jordan” (John 1:28, NASB***) ***“where John was baptizing at first”* (John 10:40)** when messengers came to Him with the news of Lazarus’ sickness.
   2. **(v. 4)** – Jesus’ response would have been somewhat enigmatic for all involved at the time, though we understand it knowing the account.
      1. The words were meant for Mary and Martha – **(v. 40)** – He said this through the messengers who returned with His words **(v. 4).**
      2. Perea was about 25 miles away – approximately a 2-day journey.
         1. **(v. 17)** – when Jesus arrived, already had been in tomb 4 days.
         2. Burials occurred on the day of death.
         3. Lazarus likely died shortly after the message was sent to Jesus – the returning message of Jesus would reach them well after his death.
      3. ***“not…but…”*** – not merely, but especially.
      4. **Yet, Jesus’ words meant even more than this, because his death would amount to God’s glory through its reversal in resurrection.**
   3. **(vv. 5-7)** – Jesus’ love for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus seems contradictory to His actions at first glance, and to the unspiritual mind.
      1. **(v. 3)** – ***“love”*** – *phileō*
      2. **(v. 5)** – ***“loved”*** – *agapaō*
      3. His love transcended mere affection and acted to serve their greater need.
      4. **(v. 39)** – the wait would only make what would already be a wonder in resurrection even more emphatic.
   4. **(vv. 11-15)** – Jesus is glad He was not there because it gives opportunity for the growth and provocation of faith for the disciples and others.
      1. ***“for your sakes”*** – death does not make Jesus glad, but understanding transcendent purpose as He does, He has reason to be glad.
      2. **His mindset is confounding but is ultimately expressive of His divine wisdom and power in which He wants all to trust.**
7. The Promise and Claim **(vv. 17-27)**
   1. **Promise** – **(vv. 20-23)** – Jesus arrives after Lazarus had been in the tomb 4 days, and Martha through grief expressed impressive faith to which Jesus gave promise.
      1. **(v. 21)** – She had full confidence in His ability to heal.
      2. **(v. 22)** – This expresses even greater faith.
         1. Jesus had raised the dead before, what about now?
         2. However, her understanding of Jesus is not as complete as He would have it to be – **based on her words and Jesus’ following words, she does not view Jesus’ power as residing within Himself.**
      3. **(vv. 23-24)** – Jesus makes a promise which she misunderstands to refer to the general resurrection that is the common hope of Israel.
   2. **Claim** – **(vv. 25-26)** – Jesus’ words serve to bring Martha’s general hope of eventual resurrection as near as Jesus’ very presence – **where Jesus is there is the very power of resurrection and life.**
      1. **Resurrection** – **(v. 25b)** – “[Resurrection] is life in conflict with and overcoming death; it is life being the death of death, meeting it in its highest manifestation, that of physical dissolution and decay, and vanquishing it there.” (Trench, R.C., Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord, pg. 254)
      2. **Life** – **(v. 26)** – as the fountain of life, fellowship with Him through faith makes death not death – this life cannot be vanquished.
   3. **(v. 27)** – her faith is admirable, but still less than what it ought to be, which is why Jesus is doing what He is doing.
8. The Compassion **(vv. 28-37)**
   1. **(vv. 32-36)** – Mary’s same expression of faith through grief and regret, along with her supporting mourners moved Jesus.
      1. ***“groaned”*** – *embrimaomai* – “to feel strongly about someth., be deeply moved” (BDAG)
         1. Most commonly referred to intense indignation – when something triggers us in this way, it is because we’re deeply connected to it, and passionate.
         2. Jesus’ reaction indicates His great love and care – despite His knowledge and intentions.
      2. ***“was troubled”*** – *tarassō* – “to agitate, trouble (a thing, by the movement of its parts to and fro)” (THAYER); “Probably of the outward manifestation of His strong feeling.” (Vincent)
      3. ***“Jesus wept”***
   2. **The phenomenon of human grief is somewhat hard to explain – the processing of facts which are abrasive to our thoughts of what should be, or what we desire to be, has a physical effect on our bodies.**
      1. **It is Jesus’ willingness to enter flesh which gave Him the ability to fully sympathize with us in this way.**
9. The Resurrection **(vv. 38-44)**
   1. **(vv. 39-40)** – Jesus alludes to His message brought back to the sisters from Perea **(v. 4)** – He establishes a connection of the circumstances to the activity of God.
   2. **(vv. 41-44)** – the words of Jesus make clear the purpose of the miracle is to confirm His identity with the Father (**cf. John 20:30-31**).
      1. **John 5:19-21** – to raise the dead is a divine prerogative shared by Jesus with the Father.
      2. These words were for their hearing, lest they miss the significance of what was to happen – Jesus is who He claimed to be and comes from the Father.
10. The Prophecy (**vv. 45-57)**
    1. Though many believed, some were unreachable even by the tremendous sign – they were those who saw and were therefore made blind **(9:39**).
    2. Even in the obstinate, conspiratorial evil-mindedness of the Pharisees to kill Jesus there is by Divine providence and eternal foresight working of power over death in more ways than one – **(vv. 49-53)** – not many days from then Jesus would die for the people and rise again to secure salvation and hope for all who would believe and obey Him.
11. The Power Over Death
12. Death Can Be Used by God for His Glory
    1. Jesus manifests His power over death by using it as a mere tool for His and the Father’s glory – **John 11:4, 14-15, 40**
       1. His raising of Lazarus concluded John’s record of Jesus’ miracles with a crescendo of the same purpose set forth in the first – **John 2:11**
       2. Jesus went from turning water into wine to turning death into life – **not simply in the reversal of Lazarus’ death, but in the evidence it supplied to bring about eternal life in Christ.**
       3. We join in with Paul – **Romans 11:33-36**
    2. Even after the purpose of miracles is fully served in the preservation of the Spirit inspired revelation, Christ continues to show His power over death – **John 16:13, 33** – **all truth – enlightening us, and giving us understanding and focus in the presence of things of the world which greatly trouble those in it, knowing that Christ has overcome the world.**
    3. Knowing my own end, and therefore my purpose – **Ecclesiastes 7:2; 11:9-12:1, 6-7, 13-14**
       1. ***“He has put eternity in their hearts” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).***
       2. **7:2** – God positions death as a provoker of thought for those who still live – that is my future as well, and then what? What is my time now being spent for?
       3. **11:9-12:1** – enjoyment of life is one of God’s blessings, but not without the judgment of how those days are spent – remembrance of Him is foremost.
       4. **12:6-7, 13-14** – the duality of man and the brevity of the physical pushes us to live with the anticipation of judgment and eternity.
          1. Death causes us to think about this day, and our purpose before God.
          2. **Therefore, death leads to God’s glory by reorienting the living to their God-given purpose.**
    4. Christ shows the power over death by blessing those who commit themselves to Him with assurance and strength to glorify Him in the most difficult circumstances, even facing death – **2 Timothy 1:6-8**
13. The Tears of Jesus are Precious Ointment for Aching Hearts
    1. Some misunderstand God as they consider the reality of death – He is uninterested in human affairs.
       1. **Hebrews 2:14-18** – He joined us in our suffering, and more so suffered for us to pay for our sins and aid us in our suffering and experiences in the flesh.
    2. Death is yet to be fully vanquished – **1 Corinthians 15:20, 25-26** – Christ’s victory ensures the final victory, but until then death claims men.
    3. Does Christ suggest the confidence of victory should eliminate sorrow? – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** – hope does not take sorrow away.
    4. Jesus wept even knowing what He was about to do – **John 11:4, 11, 23, 25, 33, 35, 38**
       1. Perhaps this is puzzling at first, but when we consider Jesus’ humanity it makes sense.
       2. Does our confidence of resurrection and eternity eliminate the anguish of suffering and loss? Did it for Jesus? (**cf. Luke 22:44)**
       3. His tears are evidence of His unique capability of true and unfailing sympathy – **Hebrews 4:15**
          1. ***“A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief…Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3-4).***
       4. “Does Jesus care when I’ve said ‘goodby’ to the dearest on earth to me, and my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks, is it aught to Him? Does He see? O yes, He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief; When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares” (Does Jesus Care) – **He cares, and He weeps with us, and in so doing helps us bear the load of grief**.
14. Jesus’ Power Over Death is Comprehensive
    1. Jesus’ claim is significant – **John 11:25-26**
       1. **Resurrection** – implies death – ***“though he may die, he shall live”***
       2. **Life** – is absent of death – ***“whoever lives…shall never die”***
       3. Jesus had identified Himself, and would again, as the source of life – **John 1:4; 4:14; 6:35; 8:58; 14:6**
       4. **This not only asserts His power over death, so as to reverse it in resurrection, but His power over death so as to secure us entirely in life.**
    2. Jesus offers us life that not even death can take away, and therefore for the Christian, death is no longer death – **John 6:27, 35, 39-40, 49-51**
       1. **Life** – **(v. 27)** – ***“endures [unto] eternal life”*** – “it produces life and salvation here and hereafter.” (Lenski) – **(v. 47)** – ***“has,”*** present tense, but what you have does not fade away – endures to eternal life.
       2. **Resurrection** – **(vv. 39-40)** – physical death does not cause a Christian to lose the life Christ has blessed him with, and what is lost in physical death is reclaimed by Christ in greater fashion.
    3. Who we are as followers of Christ now abides forever – **1 John 2:17, 28-29** – who we are as those born of Him remains, regardless of what happens to the physical body.
       1. **1 John 3:1-3** – in the resurrection/transformation, the body we’re given is fit for who we are as God’s children, and where we’ll be for eternity. (**cf. John 17:24; 1 Corinthians 15:50, 52**)
    4. Paul was confident and content even in death knowing his fellowship with Christ would be experienced on a more intimate level having shed the earthly body, and that he would be one step closer to gaining the immortal body, and heaven with it – **Philippians 1:21, 23; 3:11, 20-21**

**Conclusion**

1. The miracles of Jesus prove to us His claims (**cf. John 20:30-31**).
2. They beckon us to not waste our life on what is frivolous and without purpose, nor to be engulfed by the difficulties of a life subjected to physical reality, but to commit ourselves to Him who is able to keep us till the day of eternal redemption (**cf. 2 Timothy 1:12**).