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Lazarus (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this recording, Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of the biblical story of Lazarus, focusing on Martha's faith and Jesus' bodily resurrection of Lazarus. Gregg explains how Jesus' call to action, even in the face of danger, is an indication of God's plan for humanity to be productive and engaged with life. Despite the doubts of Martha and Thomas, Jesus demonstrates his divinity by resurrecting Lazarus, signaling the eternal life that awaits believers. Lazarus' resurrection also served as a powerful testament to Jesus' message and resulted in many coming to believe in him.

Transcript

They've essentially asked why he would want to go to Judea, since there's people who want to kill him there, and he basically gives this answer. Now, it resembles somewhat the answer he gave, or the thing he said, in John chapter 9, verse 4, when it was called to his attention that a man who had been born blind was begging there, and Jesus said, I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work.

As long as I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. Now, as I understand Jesus' meaning here in John 9, verse 4, he means that every man has a lifetime. It's like the daylight hours.

There's times when his eyes are open, where he's alive, where he can do something. There's a work day. In the natural, people can work in the daytime, but at night they can't work.

They didn't have electric lights back then. All work ended at night time. When the sun went down, there just was no way to put floodlights out on the fields to keep people working out there.

The only light they had were candles and lamps that gave only a dim relief from the darkness inside the house, and basically people went to bed at sundown to avoid burning too much oil and candle wax. So, the lifestyle was very different in days before electric lights. People just knew that when the sun goes down, there's no more work.

You can't do any more work. The darkness prevents it. You'll be stumbling around if you try to.

So, what Jesus was saying is, just like in every day there's a period of time when you can work, after which the day comes to an end and there's no more opportunity to work, so is everyone's life. Everyone has a certain allotted time of life. It may be for some only 30, 40 years, or for others as much as 80 or 90 years, but however long their life is, it represents the only opportunity they're going to have to do everything they have to do.

In Jesus' case, he died after 33 years only about. So, he had to use the time well because the night comes, that is, every man's death is when the night comes, and it's the end of his opportunity to work. And he says, the night comes for every man when no one can work.

When you die, your work is over. And Jesus' night was coming soon. He was going to die soon.

He says, I can't just sit around. There's still some daylight left, as it were. I'm the light of the world, and as long as I'm shining, as long as I'm here, I've got work to do.

The time will come when I can't do any more, that is, in his earthly body, because it would be his death time. And there seems to be a similar meaning in chapter 11, where the disciples point out that his life would be in danger if he goes down to Judea, and he says, are there not 12 hours in the day? He's probably alluding back to his statement in John 9, John 9, 4, where the daylight hours represented a man's life and the opportunities of his life to get anything done, followed by a night where he couldn't really get anything done. And here he points out that that daylight time is 12 hours long.

Now, what's the point of saying that? Well, no doubt he's saying this is something that God has arranged. God has set the limits of how long the day lasts. Man can't make it any shorter or any longer.

If there's 12 hours in the day, it's because God has ordained it to be so, and nothing man can do is going to shorten it or lengthen it. Likewise with a human's lifetime. God has determined how long it should be.

Jesus was cut off about halfway through. Others lived to great old age, but that's all in the hands of God, not in the hands of us. All we have to do is work as long as there is daylight left.

God can determine how long the daylight hours are, but as far as we're concerned, we need to busy ourselves about doing the right thing as long as there is daylight. And Jesus may be suggesting that while it is true that there were men down there trying to kill him, they won't be able to shorten his lifetime any more than man can shorten the daylight hours from 12 to anything shorter than that. Jesus may in fact die young, and he did, but

it wouldn't be because of the sovereignty of those who wanted to kill him.

The sovereignty of God is more in the picture, and I think that's what he's alluding to when he talks about the 12 hours in the day. Talk about walking in the night and stumbling because the light is not in him. It's hard to know exactly what that means.

It may be just another way of saying once it gets dark, you can't do anything effectively. You trip around, you go out and work in the fields, and there's no sunlight, you're going to be falling and tripping, and therefore it's not an opportunity to work any more. After the sun's down, you've got no more time, but for the 12 hours of daylight, you've got to keep at it, and God will make sure that you don't stumble.

God will make sure that if you're doing what you're supposed to do with the daylight hours he's given you, the hours of your life, then you'll have nothing to fear, even if people lay snares and stumbling blocks for you and try to shorten your life. Verse 11, these things he said, and after he said that to them, he said, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. Then his disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps, he'll get well.

However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought he was speaking of taking rest and sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him.

Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Now, Jesus had not yet, until verse 11, given any clue as to why he wanted to go down to Judea, but now he gives the clue. He says, Lazarus is asleep, I'm going to wake him up.

Now, I don't know if Jesus expected his disciples to understand what he meant and was disappointed at their dullness, or if he just said it the way he did and knew he'd have to explain it to them later, but they mistakenly thought he meant natural sleep. And if a man is sick, at least in painful sickness, a man doesn't get much sleep. And if he had fallen asleep, usually it would be considered that he was on his way to recovery.

Sleep is one of the best things that could happen to a sick person, if he can sleep long and rest a lot. And the disciples thought, well, if he's asleep, let's not wake him up. He'll get better.

And then Jesus had to clarify that he meant death. Now, we've talked before, so we won't take the time, which we don't really have much of today, to go into the whole issue of soul sleep. But you know that I've pointed out before that many people feel that death is an unconscious condition.

Others feel that when you die, your spirit remains conscious and goes into the presence of the Lord until the day of resurrection, at which point your spirit is rejoined to a resurrected and glorified body forever. I hold the second view. Many people have held

the view of soul sleep, and they base it, I think, largely, not entirely, there's a few other little atoms around, but mainly I think on the fact that Jesus and Paul do talk about death and call it sleep.

But as I've sought to point out before, this only occurs in contexts where resurrection is in view. And to liken death to sleep is another way of saying death is not permanent. This is a temporary condition.

Sleep is not regarded to be permanent, and therefore to speak of death as sleep is to suggest this is not permanent. Just like when one goes to sleep, you expect them to wake up, so when a Christian dies, you expect them to get up eventually. You expect that they are not going to forever be in this condition, they're going to rise again.

And you'll find Jesus used the metaphor when he talked about the gyarus' daughter, he came in there all morning and said, why are you weeping, she's not dead, she's sleeping, but he really knew she was dead, and so did they, but he went to rise her up from the dead. He woke her up. Same thing here with Lazarus, same thing in 1 Corinthians 15 or 1 Thessalonians 4 or other places where Paul or Jesus used the word sleep to describe death.

In every case, the context is the resurrection. The other possibility, of course, that he means to tell us that death is an unconscious condition, it doesn't work as well with the data. First of all, it contradicts many things, I think, in the Bible, but also it doesn't make a good metaphor because sleep is not itself an unconscious condition.

The mind is not inactive during sleeping hours, and therefore it would be a terrible metaphor if someone wished to convey the notion that death is a time where the mind is unconscious, because that is not the way sleep is, and therefore some other metaphor should be chosen, or better yet, no metaphor at all, just talk about people as being dead. We usually think of people as being dead, as being unconscious, unless we're informed otherwise. So anyway, I bring this up because Jesus does here again speak of a man who has died as if he is asleep, but it's in the context that he's going to wake him up.

His death is not permanent, it's temporary. He's going to wake him up, he's going to get him up. Now in verse 15, Jesus said, I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there, implying that if Jesus had been there, he would have raised him, and he's glad that he didn't, because now that Lazarus is dead, the disciples will have a better opportunity to see their faith grow than if he had just done a healing.

Healings in the ministry of Jesus were kind of a dime a dozen in all likelihood. I mean, the disciples eventually probably ceased to be amazed at healing. I don't know this is true, but I would imagine it's true.

I mean, they spent three and a half years watching him heal multitudes, I mean, virtually

almost every sick person he ever encountered, he healed them. And so healing the sick, although I'm sure that every case still was an occasion where they had a certain degree of marvel over it, it must have become fairly ordinary in their experience. Whereas risings from the dead, Jesus raising the dead, that didn't happen anywhere near as frequently.

Prior to this, he had raised Jairus' daughter and he'd raised the widow's son of Nain, and apart from that, we don't know of any other cases where Jesus raised the dead. And even in those two cases, the persons involved had only recently died, like the same day. Where here was a case where a man was to be raised who had already begun to decompose, was four days in the grave, there could be little doubt that he was really dead.

See, there are those, even liberals today, when they talk about the story of Jairus' daughter or the son of the widow of Nain, they suggest that the story has a germ of truth in it, they just believe that the persons involved were not really dead. They were in a coma, but this was a pre-scientific age, back in days when it didn't require a medical person to pronounce someone legally dead. It wasn't until they began to embalm all corpses that it became required by law that someone be declared dead by a medical professional, because they don't want to start pumping the blood out of a person who might be alive and some non-professional has declared them dead.

That would be kind of an embarrassing situation if a person wakes up and he's got no blood left, just embalming fluid in his veins. Of course, he's not going to wake up, but the point is you'd have killed him. It is assumed now that if a medical professional pronounces him dead, then you can safely proceed with embalming.

But before the days when they universally embalmed all dead people, they didn't wait for a medical professional. They just watched for a little while. If the person's heart wasn't beating, their body was cold, they took him out and buried him.

However, there are cases where people might be in a coma or in some other state where they're not really dead, and the non-professionals around have misdiagnosed them as dead, and that Jesus came at an opportune time, the liberals would suggest, and happened to get them to come back too. I would say still, Jesus' ability to raise someone from a coma, even if that were the correct explanation, which I reject, by the way, even if that were true, that would still be a mighty miracle. Medical science doesn't yet know how to bring people out of a coma.

And if Jesus, a Jewish peasant wandering around without any magical powers or supernatural powers, was able to walk into a room where someone had lapsed into a coma and the person had no vital signs and could just speak to them and they wake up, I'd say that'd be pretty remarkable in any case. Although the Bible does tell us that they were dead, and that's how we receive that. But in Lazarus' case, there can hardly be any

doubt.

He'd been buried for four days, there was a certain amount of decomposition. This was a case unlike any other. Though Jesus had raised other dead people, he had never raised anyone in quite this condition.

And Jesus said, I'm glad that I didn't, in this case, heal him, because your faith will have an occasion to increase as a result of seeing a greater miracle this way. And Thomas, who is called Didymus. Now, Thomas is an Aramaic name and Didymus is its Greek equivalent.

It's like Cephas and Peter. Cephas is Aramaic, Peter is Greek. Cephas means rock and Peter means rock, just in two different languages.

Thomas means the twin in Aramaic and Didymus means the same thing in Greek. So apparently what we're told here is Thomas, who's also called Didymus, it means that his name was Thomas, but in the circles of Greek-speaking people, he went by the Greek equivalent of his name, Didymus. It's a little bit like, if Jesus came to America, he'd probably call himself Jesus, although where he lived, he probably was called Yeshua, since that'd be the way the Aramaic-speaking contemporaries of him would call him.

I'm sure that no one ever called him Jesus, they called him Yeshua. But, if he came to an English culture, his Anglicized form of his name would probably be used, just for the sake of, I don't know, I'm not sure I'd give a reason for it, but that's what was done in the Bible with, for instance, Cephas, in Greek-speaking audiences, he was sometimes called Peter. It's the Greek equivalent of his name.

Anyway, Thomas was called the twin, we're never told why, but I think we should assume that he probably had a twin brother, and therefore he was called the twin. Now, he said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him. Now, there's different ways to understand this statement.

One is a statement of Thomas' loyalty, he's willing to die with Jesus. If Jesus is going to die, Thomas doesn't want to live. If he's going to lose Jesus, he wants to die too.

And I think that's the most charitable way to interpret Thomas' remark. If that is the correct way of understanding it, then it's nice that it's there, because the only other thing we know about Thomas is his doubting about the resurrection of Jesus later on in the Gospel of John. And it would be that John has here shown us that there's not only that aspect of Thomas to know, that he's just doubting Thomas, but he was a heroic Thomas too, and dedicated to Christ so much that he'd rather die than lose Jesus.

And that is probably the best way to look at this, although there have been some commentators that felt like Thomas' words were sort of a sarcastic criticism of Jesus here, that, you know, sort of saying, well, let's go with him, and he's going to die, so I

guess we'll die too. But basically saying Jesus is making a poor judgment here. If Jesus has got this death wish, you know, we might as well go with him.

See, he could have just said, let's go with Jesus, whatever the danger. But to say, let us go and die with him is to suggest that Jesus, since they didn't know that Jesus actually intended to die, that Jesus was making a miscalculation here, and he was going to die, and that was going to be the result of his poor decision, and we might as well go along with him. Some feel there's some sarcasm in that.

I'd prefer to think better of Thomas than that, and so you can make up your own mind, but we'll never really know for sure what the nuance was of Thomas' comment in verse 16. So when Jesus came, he found that he had already been in the tomb for four days, that is, Lazarus had been. Now, Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away, and many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother.

These were probably professional mourners as well as relatives and neighbors. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, a messenger must have brought her information about that, went and met him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you.

Jesus said to her, your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection of the life.

He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world. Not quite the same thing he asked her.

And it says, and when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, the Teacher has come and is calling for you. So as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha had met him.

Then the Jews who were with her in the house and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, she is going to the tomb to weep there. Then when Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Now you will notice that Mary and Martha say exactly the same thing to Jesus when they first see him.

Their words are verbatim the same. They probably had rehearsed this among

themselves. They probably said it to each other, if Jesus had been here, Lazarus would not have died.

If Jesus had just been here, Lazarus would not have died. They had been saying this for four days, they had it well rehearsed, and so when they first see Jesus, they both say the same thing, although they see him individually and say it individually. Now there is a difference.

Martha adds in verse 22, but even now I know that whatever you ask God, God will give it to you. Which she doesn't dare to say, you know, you might be able to raise him from the dead, but there is maybe a hint of that. I mean, what else could she be implying? It's hard to know for sure.

Although she might be saying, Jesus, you sure made a blunder here, but we know God's not mad at you. You know, God will still listen to your prayers. But I think that's less likely than the suggestion that she's maybe against hope, hoping that there may still be something that Jesus can do, maybe even implying raising him from the dead, but she doesn't have any firm convictions that this is going to happen, obviously, even when Jesus says to her directly, your brother will rise again.

She still is not willing to believe that that means now. Well, for one thing, Jesus didn't say he's going to rise again now, although he meant that in this case. She had apparently misunderstood him, she probably was thinking, when he said this sickness is not unto death, and it turned out to be, so when he said, your brother will rise again, she probably didn't dare hope that he meant now.

I mean, after all, it could mean eventually. And that's what she says, I know, you know, in the resurrection of the last day he's going to live again, we all are. She was a good Pharisee, I mean, in the sense of, not in the bad sense of that word, the Pharisees were that sect who believed in the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees didn't.

She probably really wasn't a member of the Sadducean party, but she held the views they did because Jesus held those views, that there'd be a resurrection of the last day. And so she was informed of this and said, I know that, we believe that. But Jesus then says, I am the resurrection of the life.

Now this is one of the seven or so, I am, sayings of Jesus that are connected to specific miracles in the Gospel of John. I am the resurrection is followed by Jesus' act of raising Lazarus from the dead. Now, there is a possibility that Jesus in saying this is slightly rebuking Martha.

Martha first says, Lord, if you had been here, pointing to the past, it's too late now. If you had been here, we might have had some reason to believe that our brother would be alive today. Although she does express some faint hope that maybe there's still some

possible hope.

And then he says, well, he's going to live again? She says, oh yeah, the resurrection of the last day. She focuses on what could have been in the past and what will be in the distant future, but she's not daring to think of whether he could come through for her right now. And he calls her attention to the present moment.

I am right now. This is what I am. If I'm here, the resurrection is here.

I am the resurrection of the life. And therefore, if I say your brother arrives again and I'm here, you don't have to wait until the last day. I can do it now.

Now, it is somewhat psychologically easier for us, I think, to trust God about things that are already in the past and we don't have to trust him about it anymore. To focus on the past and say, well, things have turned out the way they are because of what God chose to do in the past and I guess I'm still okay. I'm still living.

Things didn't turn out the way I wanted to, but I can't say God has let me down entirely. And it's easy to look to the distant future, which is kind of nebulous and unreal in a sense. I mean, I shouldn't say it's unreal because it's substantial to those who have faith, but it seems unreal many times.

Well, someday we'll be delivered from all this. Someday all the evil in the world will be put down and there'll be no more sorrow and no more tears. But it's a little harder to just make it real right now in our faith.

To say, well, but what about right now? I mean, I have to admit that God has provided all my needs in the past and I believe that God is going to provide all my eternal needs in the future. So why should it be hard for me to believe that he could do it right now? Because right now is where I'm living and it kind of, I don't know, there's something very confrontational about the present moment. And it's challenging.

It's easy to predict that God will do something nice far away in the future. I don't have to believe for that right now. But to face a present crisis and say, well, I know God's going to do such and so and he's going to take care of it in this way, it takes a little stiffer, sturdier kind of a faith.

And I think that what Jesus is saying to her, you know, you're thinking about the past and you're thinking about the future, but you're not realizing what is right here now in the person of me. I am the resurrection of life. There's not a reason in the world why you can't expect your brother to rise now while I'm here.

And he goes on and says in verse 25, he who believes in me, though he may die, yet he will live, which seems to have a fairly clear meaning that any believer who dies will someday live again, or maybe will just live on in the spirit. It could mean either way.

Because earlier, well, even in the next statement in verse 26, it says, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Now, if you are alive and you believe in Jesus, he said you'll never die. So even if your physical body dies, yet you'll live on. But there's more than one way to understand this.

Basically, what he's saying is that death ceases to be an interruption for the believer. It ceases to change anything in terms of their life. It just changes their location.

It doesn't bring an end to their life. If a Christian dies physically, he's still going to live. Now, whether he means in the resurrection or whether he means he lives on in the spirit is not really, in my opinion, too relevant for this particular question.

But he does, I think he means lives on in the spirit, but to be later raised also in the flesh. But there are two categories of Christians, those who have died and those who haven't died. You and I are in the second category.

We haven't died, but we might die. If we end up dying, the Bible says we will live again because the dead in Christ shall rise first. However, if we end up not dying, then we will never die because we who are alive and remain should be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

There have always been and there always will be, until the day Jesus comes back, Christians who have died and Christians who have not yet died. And Jesus says, no matter what category you're in, if you're one of those who may die, yet you'll live. If you are alive, you'll never die.

And basically what he's saying is life is forever uninterrupted for the believer. Now, in the context here, that is, wherever he is, there is life. And we will never be separated from him, even in death.

Therefore, we'll still have life, even if we have to die. And he is the resurrection. That doesn't necessarily mean he's focusing on the resurrection of the last day.

In fact, it may mean the opposite. Not that he doesn't believe in the resurrection of the last day, but he's not focusing on that. He's focusing on the fact that wherever he is, there's already been a resurrection.

Wherever he is, there's already resurrection life present. If you'll turn back to John chapter 5, verse 24, Jesus said, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. And he's talking about living people who have not really physically died yet, but he says that person who believes in him has already passed from death to life.

They already have resurrection life. If you have Jesus, you have the resurrection already. That doesn't mean that there won't be an additional resurrection of your body at the last day, but you have experienced resurrection life already in the person of Jesus in you.

And of course, what that is going to have as well as implications with Lazarus may be questionable, because it doesn't seem, I mean, seen that way, that doesn't seem that relevant to what he's about to do with Lazarus. But what he is saying is wherever I am, there is life and there is resurrection, and therefore, since I'm here, you need to expect that your brother will live again with me here. And she said to him, Yes, he asked, Do you believe this? She said, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is to come in the world.

And she didn't quite say, Yes, I believe that you're going to raise my brother from the dead today. But she said, I still affirm that you are who I always thought you were. I always did think you were the Christ, and the fact that you didn't raise my brother or didn't heal him doesn't change my convictions about that.

Then she sent for Mary, and it's interesting, Mary was sitting there, we're specifically told in verse 20 that the news came to Mary and Martha, it would appear, maybe only Martha got the news, but possibly it was announced to both sisters that Jesus was coming, and Martha jumped up and ran out to confront him with her complaint. Mary, it says in verse 20, remained sitting in the house. Why? Wasn't she interested in seeing Jesus? Yeah, but that's how she was also in the John 10 story.

Martha was always acting quickly, acting on her own volition, and Mary always waited to be asked by Jesus. That's why she wasn't serving in the kitchen. When she was sitting at Jesus' feet, she could tell that Jesus didn't have that as something he wanted her to do, so she didn't do it and looked to him.

Here, she waits to be asked, and when Martha sends a message that the Master has come, he's asking for her, she jumps up and runs out to meet him immediately, but she doesn't come until he calls her. Mary is seen to be very much like she is portrayed in the other plays as well. We get the impression that Martha is a pretty impetuous, quick to act, kind of take charge kind of a woman, and she does what she sees as right without waiting around to find out if that's what Jesus wants her to do or not.

We're not told here that she did the wrong thing in this case, but she didn't wait for Jesus to call for her as far as we know. Mary did. Mary seems to be more of a pensive, quiet, contemplative sort, waiting, doesn't want to do anything until she knows that's what the Lord wants her to do, and she tends to get revelations that other people don't get.

When she anointed Jesus with oil the next day, or whatever it was in the next chapter, I should say, Jesus indicated that she was anointing him for his death. Well, none of the disciples even knew he was going to die yet. Here, Mary already had caught that.

She had been listening carefully to what he was saying, and she understood, and she anointed him for his death, but the disciples didn't have a clue. So here, this woman is more, I think, spiritually attuned than her sisters, and probably even than the disciples are. But as soon as Jesus asked for her, she comes, but she has the same complaint Martha did.

She says, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Now, it says in verse 33, Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And he said, Where have you laid him? And they said to him, Lord, come and see.

And Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, See how he loved him. And some of them said, Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind also have kept this man from dying? Then Jesus again, groaning in himself, came to the tomb.

It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead for four days.

And Jesus said to her, Did I not say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? Now, we see Jesus twice in this section groaning. In the first case, in verse 33, it said he groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And then again in verse 38, Jesus again groaning in himself.

Now, in between those two, we read the shortest verse of the Bible, verse 35, Jesus wept. Here in this story, we see probably more attention given to the inward emotional life of Jesus than in maybe any other passage in the Bible. We read of Jesus being angry in Mark chapter 3, and we read of Jesus loving Mary and Martha and Lazarus here.

We also read in Mark that he loved the rich young ruler. Jesus' emotions are only seldom drawn attention to, except in so far as we can detect what they are by his behavior. But only rarely do the Gospels tell us what's going on inside, in his feelings, in his heart.

And here, this story gives us a peek behind the curtain. Here, Jesus is not some stoic, austere, machine-like robot. He knows that he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

He's already announced that to his disciples. But he still weeps. Now, there's many people who've wondered why Jesus wept.

One of the explanations that is often given, which I don't think is the correct one, frankly, is that Jesus was saddened by their lack of faith. I don't think that's the correct answer. The reason I say that is Jesus had been confronted with lack of faith on every side during his entire ministry.

And if someone says, but these were his friends, he's particularly disappointed that they

didn't believe in him enough. I would say, but his own disciples had to be rebuked many times for their little faith and lack of faith, and yet he didn't weep on those occasions. I don't think that the story is told in this way, in such a way as to tell us that Jesus wept because they didn't have much faith.

There's no clue given that that is his reason. What we are told is that Jesus, the first mention of his emotional struggle is in verse 33, where it says, he saw her weeping. And he saw those who came with her weeping.

And that made him groan. That drew forth strong emotion in him. Empathy, I believe.

And that resulted in him weeping himself. Now, we needn't suggest that Jesus wouldn't feel the same kind of sorrow that they had, just because he knew and they didn't that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. I personally think, and this is only a theory, that Jesus may have at that moment had a more graphic vision than usual of the pain and suffering, even on righteous and good people, that death and sin had brought into the world.

Death is obviously the result of sin. The wages of sin is death. And here was a case of a good man, a friend of Jesus, and other friends of his, the sisters and so forth, and family.

These people were hurting. They were grieving. They were weeping, and he felt their grief.

I think he was in touch with the great tragedy of death. Even though in this particular case he knew he was going to alleviate it immediately. Within a few moments, probably, he raised the man from the dead and he knew he was going to do it.

But that didn't change the fact that this whole incident put him in touch with the kind of grief that death in general has brought on the human race. And his empathy with his friends, I think, just caused him to be overwhelmed. Of course, in his own death and resurrection, he had yet to overcome death and would do so.

But even then, it would not put an end to earthly physical death. And for many centuries afterwards, including our own time, good people would have occasion to weep and mourn and feel sad over the loss of loved ones. Not until the resurrection will it be said, O grave, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? It's not until the resurrection that all the grief that death has caused will be brought to an end, and every tear will be wiped from their eyes.

And so Jesus, I think, was just in touch, for this time probably more than most times, because of his sympathy for his friends and seeing the deep grief that death, a generic reality, but one that he confronted in a special sympathetic situation like this because of his friendship with these people. I think the generic reality of death, he got a real revelation here of how painful it is on human beings. Even on this particular case, he was

going to do something about it instantly, yet he wouldn't be doing that for everybody.

He wasn't going to raise every dead person right away. And there would be many more centuries of people grieving just like these people do over the loss of loved ones. Well, when he came to the tomb, he told them to take away the stone.

Martha said, Lord, this isn't a good idea. It's going to smell bad. Four days.

I think you ought to reconsider. And in verse 40, Jesus said, didn't I say to you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God? Now, as I pointed out, there's no place prior to this in the narrative where he said those exact words to her. But I believe he's putting together two things he said to her earlier in the narrative.

One was the message he sent four days earlier, or at least maybe six days earlier. It's hard to know. Back in verse 4, he sent a message saying that this is going to result in the glory of God.

That would certainly justify his comment, I told you, you're going to see the glory of God in this situation if you'll believe. Also, he had said to Martha earlier in verse 26, whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? He asked her about her belief.

And so, that's right after he said, I'm the resurrection of life and your brother's going to live again. So he had basically called upon her earlier to believe that she was going to see the glory of God in this situation. But she wasn't believing it.

She felt like, you know, this is a bad move, opening the tomb. It's just going to release all those odors and stuff. And Jesus said, no, I told you if you'd believe you'd see the glory of God.

But this is always the order. Well, I shouldn't say always, but frequently it is. God doesn't show us anything until we believe first.

The natural man says, when I see, I will believe. And Jesus said, no, if you believe, then you'll see. If you believe, then you will see the glory of God.

We're often called to believe in that which we haven't seen. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And it says of Jesus, whom having not seen, we love.

In 1 Peter 1.8. So Jesus also said to Thomas after his resurrection, he says, you believe because you've seen. Blessed are those who having not seen yet believe. We're called upon to believe many things we haven't yet seen.

But if you believe, someday you'll be in a position to see these things. And if we wait until we see them before we decide to believe them, we've got the order reversed. You

have to believe it first, Jesus said, and then you'll see the glory of God.

So they took away the stone from the place. In verse 41, where the dead man was lying, and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. And I know that you always hear me because, but because of these people who are standing by, I said this, that they may believe that you sent me.

Now he didn't pray for Lazarus to rise from the dead. When it came to raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus had his own methods. He didn't pray for the dead to rise, but he did pray before he raised him.

But his prayer did not contain a request, but a thank you. His prayer thanked his father that he knew his father was always attentive to what he asked. And he says, and I only say this out loud, not because I need to say it out loud, but except for these people, I want them to know that when this miracle is done, it's because of your connection with this deal.

You know, if God provides everything automatically without us praying, there's no obvious reason for us to recognize it as a special blessing from him. If, however, we specifically pray for a thing and then it happens, it's much more reasonable that we conclude that this was an answer to prayer. God did this.

This is a special thing that God did. And Jesus could have just healed the man without this prayer, but he wanted God to be connected in the minds of his hearers to it. He wanted them to know that Jesus wasn't just doing this on his own, but he'd been sent by God.

And that the father was doing this through him as his agent, and he wanted his father to get the glory for it because he had said, this sickness is for the glory of God. Now, verse 43, when he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.

And Jesus said to them, loose him and let him go. Now, preachers do enjoy preaching about this, this part about loose him and let him go, and I don't think they're wrong to do so. I just don't have time to preach about it today because our time is just about out.

But let me just say the point that is commonly made, and that is this, that Lazarus, you know, much, much in what is recorded as miracles in the Gospel of John, John includes these miracles and leaves out others because these ones are very apt illustrations of spiritual truth. Even in this case, the raising of Lazarus is connected with Jesus being the resurrection life, the resurrection and the life. And every person who is born again is like a Lazarus, somebody who experiences through contact with Jesus a resurrection life.

We are all spiritually dead in trespasses and sins until we become Christians, and that

conversion we pass from death into life, just like Lazarus did here. And it's very likely that John intended us to make this connection. He was telling a true story about Lazarus, but his selection of miracles were there to make spiritual parallels, like the man born blind, and who after Jesus opened his eyes, Jesus said, I came so that blind eyes might be made seen, and seen eyes might be made blind.

In other words, he gave a spiritual thing and said, I'm the light of the world. So, it's not wrong, I think, for preachers, in fact, I think it's quite appropriate to see Lazarus and the raising of Lazarus to be a picture of conversion, of a person who is spiritually dead, Jesus brings him to life. But also, while a dead man may appropriately be bound up like a mummy in grave clothes, a living man finds such bindings restricted.

And so once a person has been brought from death to life, they need to be unbound. Now, different people preach this different ways. Some would say that after you're converted, you need to go through deliverance ministry and get unbound from demonic oppressions.

Some would say you need to go through inner healing to get unbound, and so forth. I would just say that the unbinding of the man who's come from death into life is the process of discipling. Jesus said, if you continue in my words, then you'll know the truth, you'll be my disciples, and the truth will make you free, unbound.

When we come to the Lord, we are bound by wrong thinking, by lies of the world and lies of the devil, that we've imbibed all of our lives and we need to be retrained. We need to be taught what Jesus said, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. That's a process, and it's like peeling off the grave clothes of our former life.

Our thinking has to be altered, and if we don't change our thinking, we'll be like a living person wrapped up like a mummy, unable to walk the Christian walk appropriately. Grave clothes are appropriate for dead people, but not for live people. They have to be removed and replaced with the clothes of a living person.

And so we put off the old man, and we put on the new man. And this is through the process of discipleship, by learning what Jesus said, allowing our minds to be transformed by the truth, and being made free by it. That's how I would understand the connection here.

I don't make it a reference to deliverance from demons or inner healing from past hurts or anything like that, though I will say this, deliverance may be necessary after conversion. I don't deny that. I'm just saying that the more common phenomenon in the life of the average believer would be that everyone needs, once they've come from death, everyone needs to be retrained.

They need to be set free from their old ways of thinking, from the bondage of the lies

that they've taken on. They need to be unbound and let go, and that's what the training of a disciple involves. We have to hurry through the last few verses here.

Figuring that if the general populace accepted Jesus as the Messiah, that would lead to a popular revolt against Rome. The Romans would come in and crush the revolt and possibly obliterate the nation. The irony is that they ended up killing Jesus to avoid this, but as a judgment for their killing Jesus, they brought this very thing upon themselves, and God judged them for killing Jesus by causing the very thing they greatly feared to come upon them, the Romans coming in and taking away both their place and the nation.

And one of them, Caiaphas, being the high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish. Now he says, you know nothing at all, he's basically saying, you guys aren't speaking clearly. They said, if we let him alone, verse 48, everyone will believe in him, then we're in big trouble.

They hadn't dared to say, we need the plot to kill him. And Caiaphas just comes around and says it, listen, don't be stupid, don't beat around the bush, don't ignore the obvious facts. The obvious facts are we can't let him alone, we have to kill him to spare the nation from this fate.

Now it's interesting, John says in verse 51, now this he did not say in his own authority, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then from that day on, they plotted to put Jesus to death. Now there had been some plotting to put Jesus to death before this.

And there had also been spontaneous births of anger on their part, where they took up stones hoping to kill him. But this became more of a plot with a calculated plan to get Jesus, to snag him, and to find some way to accuse him and get him killed. And by the way, verse 10 of the next chapter, chapter 12 verse 10, says, but the chief priest plotted also to put Lazarus to death, because on account of him, many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

So here we have the proof of what Abraham said to the rich man in Sheol. When the rich man said, send Lazarus back, that will make my brothers believe. And Abraham said, no, if they reject truth already, if they won't hear Moses and the prophets, they're not going to be convinced by someone rising from the dead.

Certainly this story justified Abraham's remarks, because here's a case where, a rare one, where God did send someone back from the dead, and sure enough, it didn't cause these people to believe. Those who are already resistant to truth would not be convinced by a man returning from the dead. And we see it quite clearly, they'd rather, as Paul put

it in Romans, they'd rather suppress the truth in their unrighteousness, destroy the evidence.

And a living Lazarus was evidence that caused people to believe in Jesus. So instead of letting the evidence point where it would, namely that the Pharisees themselves and the chief priests should believe in Jesus, they'd rather destroy the evidence and hold on to their lie. Verse 54, therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness to a city called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.

Which is, he didn't stay in Judea, even though he went to Judea to do this, he didn't go there to die this time. He left the country again and hung out in another place, probably in Korea. Okay, that brings us to the end of our time, and the end of this section that we had to cover.