

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

The Grave Is Not the End!

John 11 1 Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ... 4 When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to *the* disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ... 14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

...

20 Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." ... 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

...

38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha ... said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. ... He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

TEXT: John 11:1-45

INTRODUCTION: Last week we considered one of the most glorious of all the promises Jesus made to believers during His sojourn with us upon the earth.

John 10:27–28 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Only a short time after speaking these words, Jesus received a message that His good friend Lazarus was sick. However, the Master was very intentional in not going immediately to Bethany where, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived so that He could perform a miracle of healing.

In fact, Jesus indicated to His disciples that His delay in going had an important purpose. Jesus said, John 11:4 ... “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

And, indeed, Lazarus did die, and then Jesus went and miraculously, wondrously, gloriously, raised Lazarus from the dead. But **the question we need to ask** here in order to get the fullness of John’s message from this portion of Scripture is **“Why?”**

Why did Jesus wait to raise Lazarus instead of going earlier to heal him?

I. TO TEACH US MORE ABOUT SALVATION

The raising of Lazarus pictures the salvation of the lost sinner in many ways.

A. Lazarus Was Dead

Lazarus was dead, not just sick.

The lost person is spiritually dead, not just spiritually sick.

A man who is physically dead does not respond to physical things: hunger, cold, pain. A man who is spiritually dead is insensitive to spiritual things: God, the Bible, church.

The lost person does not need healing or reforming. Education, morality, therapy, or religion is useless. He is dead. He needs a resurrection. He needs new life from the Life Giver, the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Lazarus Stank

This seems to be a cruel commentary about a dead man, but the words of his sister are blatantly accurate. His body was decayed and the odor was nauseating. Such is the effect of sin upon the life.

When a lost man stands before God, the Bible says that the best he has to offer, his righteousness, is as filthy rags.

- He is like a decaying corpse before a Holy Father.
- All of the cosmetics of wealth, popularity, and position
- or the perfumes of church membership and outward morality
- cannot hide the fact that he is dead and his life “stinks.”

There is only one solution. The dead man needs life.

John 11:25-26 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

C. Lazarus Was Loved

Jesus desires to give life to every lost sinner – because He loves the sinner and wants to honor the Father.

D. Lazarus Was Raised From the Dead to New Life

The theme of the Gospel of John is that Jesus came that we might have life, eternal and abundant.

E. Lazarus Was Loosed From His Bonds

After Jesus raised Lazarus, what command did He give? "Unbind him, and let him go." The Lord did not want him walking around in grave clothes. He was alive. He was also free.

Jesus likewise sets us free when we are saved to walk in newness of life.

F. Lazarus Lived a New Life

After Lazarus was given life, he did not return to "business as usual." Three things characterized his new life.

1. He witnessed.
2. He was persecuted.
3. He fellowshiped with the Lord.

II. TO DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER OVER DEATH

A. Had Jesus not already done this? Had He not already given life to several who had died?

Without question. However, in every case prior to this, the person Jesus raised had only been dead a few hours.

- Skeptics could have said the person was just unconscious.
- Lazarus had been dead 4 days.
- The stench testified that he was already decomposing.

B. The power of this act is verified by its results.

- Many who saw it believed.
- It moved Caiaphas to declare that the only way to stop the masses from turning to follow Jesus was to kill Him.

C. Raising Lazarus was a dramatic and lasting demonstration of the reality of Jesus words.

John 11:25–26 ... “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. ...”

III. TO REINFORCE THE COMFORT/WARNING THAT THE GRAVE IS NOT THE END

Preacher, what do you mean by comfort/warning? I mean

the truth that Jesus declared that **THE GRAVE IS NOT THE END** is

- a comfort to all who have trusted in Him,
- but it is a warning to all who have not.

A. Concerning Jesus’ own approaching death.

1. A comfort to those who would witness the cruel injustice of the crucifixion, and stand in disbelief that such could happen to the Promised Messiah.
 - They would hide their eyes to see His mutilated body after the Romans whipped Him.
 - They would weep in agony to watch Him endure the suffering of the cross.
 - Their souls would groan in despair to think that their Savior had died and left them alone.
 - But then, they would remember Lazarus walking out of that tomb, and remember “The grave is not the end!”
2. But that same thought served as warning.
 - To Caiaphas who conspired to bring about the murder of God’s Anointed.
 - And to Pilate who like a coward would not resist the raucous crowd but yielded to their cat calls for the death of an innocent man.
 - After each of them did their dastardly deed and had seen to it that Jesus’ body went into the tomb, how many times do you think the name Lazarus came into their minds with the message “The grave is not the end!”

B. Concerning our own approaching deaths.

Death indeed is approaching each of us, and none of us know the speed with which it comes or when it will arrive.

1. We are comforted if we have trusted Christ and are counted among His believing followers.
 - While we may yet fear the manner of our death.
 - We may still dread the separation for the things and people we know and love.
 - Yet remembering Lazarus come strolling out of a stinky tomb four days after they sealed him inside.
 - Rekindles fiery hope within our breast “The grave is not the end!”
2. But those who have not yet turned to Jesus in faith to trust Him as Lord and Savior and surrender their lives to Him to follow Him forever as their Lord, Lazarus serves as a warning!
 - “The grave is not the end!”
 - My existence does not cease.
 - My consciousness does not terminate.
 - I will live on, but where will it be?

Yes, the raising of Lazarus reminds us of words Jesus had spoken earlier on this same subject.

John 5:28–29 28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

- **Everyone will experience the resurrection**
 - **Some will be a part of the Resurrection of Life – Heaven**
 - **Some will be a part of the Resurrection of Condemnation – Lake of Fire**

God’s Word is exceedingly plain. There is no need for confusion.

If you trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved.

- **Your soul and spirit will go to heaven when you die.**
- **You will be given an eternal body at the rapture.**
- **You will live with the Lord forever.**

If you do not trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you remain lost.

- **Your soul and spirit will go to hell when you die.**
- **You will be given an eternal body at the end of the Millennium and brought before God in judgment.**
- **You will be cast into the lake of fire, and because you are in a resurrected body, it will not die – forever.**

C. The raising of Lazarus serves as both a comfort and a warning as well concerning the lost of this world:

- **Our lost loved ones**
 - **Our lost friends**
 - **Our lost classmates, working companions, neighbors**
 - **The lost all around us in our world.**
1. We are comforted when we see God show us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and God blesses our witness and lost people we know get saved.
 2. We are warned when we remember that for those who remain lost in their sin the grave is not the end.
 - They too shall die.
 - They too shall be resurrected.
 - They too will either spend eternity with God
 - Or be forever separated from Him.

CONCLUSION: Is the raising of Lazarus a comfort or a warning to you?