

The Raising of Lazarus
Looking into the Face of Jesus
The Life of Christ, 2: Pages 159-166
Manuscript: Lesson Plan 79

Introduction

Our text for this lesson is John 11:1-53.
Can anyone quote John 11:35? It is the shortest verse in the Bible. Some consider what we are about to study to be "the climactic miracle in the ministry of Christ." This occasion was definitely a pivotal moment in Christ's life.
After this miracle, the sporadic, unorganized efforts to kill Jesus changed to the intentional, well thought out efforts of His enemies to take His life. We will see in this lesson what the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead meant to Christ's story and purpose.
This was not the first time He had raised individuals from the dead. He raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17). He raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43). However, this seems to be a more climactic event due to the emphasis John puts on this miracle, the location (two miles from Jerusalem), the crowd, and the effect it had on Jesus' enemies.
We are going to take a slightly different approach in this lesson. We will read the text at each section. It is a long text, so we are going to talk about just a few of main points of the chapter. We start with. . .

Jesus was Told of Lazarus' Illness (John 11:1-16 - read).

We are told of the characters and the situation (John 11:1-3). Jesus loved this family (John 11:5). It is not hard to see why Jesus' statement, "This sickness is not to end in death," may have confused His disciples (John 11:4).
Why do you think Jesus stayed two days longer even after hearing the news (John 11:6)? It was not due to indifference; John 11:5 makes it clear He loved the man. It was not to make sure Lazarus was dead. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days (John 11:17). If it was a one-day trip, Lazarus died when the messengers left. If it was a two-day trip, Lazarus died about the time the messengers reached Jesus. If it was a three-day trip, Lazarus would have died on the way, even if Jesus had left when He heard the news. The point is that Lazarus was going to die before Jesus got there no matter what.
Some speculate that Jesus waited two days just so everyone would know that Lazarus was "really" dead. Regardless of the reason, we do know that God's plan and purpose was to, as David Roper wrote in the Truth for Today Commentary Series, "use this tragedy to establish, beyond any reasonable doubt, that Jesus was His Son."

His disciples were concerned for His life (John 11:8). What was Jesus trying to say in His response (John 11:9, 10)? Jesus was not just saying to walk by day and hide by night; that would be contrary to how He teaches. Jesus knew His time was fixed and that His enemies would not determine His time. That was a divine plan made by our Divine Maker. As long as He walked in the light of God's plan, He knew He had nothing to worry about. If He walked in the darkness, He would fail. How powerful is that for us today? We should all remember what He tried to teach His disciples.

The disciples did not understand though (John 11:12-16). They did not understand the purpose of Lazarus' illness or the teaching they just heard. Notice that Thomas said, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." Is that not amazing? What commitment he showed in spite of his being known as "the Doubter" by many today!

Jesus Spoke with Martha (John 11:17-27).

There are two great statements and thoughts in this section. The first is John 11:25, 26 (read).

This is another "I am" statement. Do you truly believe this? If we did, I think many of our lives would be drastically different.

The second is John 11:27 (read).

This confession by Martha is one that teaches three great truths. Jesus is the Christ; Jesus is the Son of God; and Jesus came into the world. It deserves a place alongside Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:16).

Jesus Raised Lazarus (John 11:28-44).

A key verse in this section is "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Why did Jesus weep? The Pharisees thought it was because of the love He had for Lazarus (John 11:36). That was not the case. Jesus knew He would see him again soon. John 11:33 says that Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit and was troubled." These Greek words are used several times in the Gospels. They are most often used in a negative sense to refer to Christ's anger.

Why was Jesus moved and troubled? Could it be He did not like the excessive waiting demanded by custom? Could it be that He was upset because of the fact sin had entered the world and now moments like this existed? Could it be that He was troubled by the lack of faith of those around Him? Could it be that He was troubled by the fact that He was going to have to bring Lazarus back from paradise? Or could it simply be that He was troubled over the pain His loved ones were enduring?

He may have been troubled and crying because Mary and Martha were troubled and crying. We serve a God and Savior who loves us dearly. He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). Try to always allow "Jesus wept" to remind you of the compassion that He has for you.

Picture Lazarus bound and wrapped walking out of the tomb after Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth"!

The Plot to Kill Jesus was Formed (John 11:45-53).

There were many who believed (John 11:45). Of course, there were others who still would not believe (John 11:46). By way of application we can ask: is that you today? Are you still being blinded from seeing the obvious—the love that Christ has for you, the sacrifice He made, and the obedience that is required?

The council was now gathered; this was the Sanhedrin (John 11:47). Remember, we just studied in Luke 16 how Christ said that these individuals would not believe even if someone were to rise from the dead; here is His application and reality.

They were not denying His miracles (John 11:47). What were they worried about (John 11:48)? They were worried that He would cause turmoil in the country.

They were worried then the Romans would come and put tighter restrictions on them. They were worried they would lose their positions of power. Caiaphas was the high priest, not only in the year of Jesus' death, but from AD 18-36, according to history (John 11:49). He told the council it was better for one man (Jesus) to die than for their livelihood to not exist. Listen how God made Caiaphas prophesy about Jesus not only dying for Israel, but also for the Gentiles (John 11:51, 52).

"So from that day on they planned together to kill Him" (John 11:53). Here you see the transition mentioned in the introduction. There is a little more to this than what is on the surface. Previously, the Pharisees were taking the lead on trying to destroy Christ. But the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection) dominated the Sanhedrin. They were particularly bothered by the resurrection of Lazarus and would now take the lead in trying to take Jesus' life.

Conclusion

There are several lessons that we can learn. One would be that Jesus showed courage and trust in God by going to Jerusalem knowing God would take care of Him. Another would be that Jesus is the Resurrection. If you believe on Him, you will never die spiritually. A third would be how Jesus showed compassion for others and wept. And, finally, those who witnessed the miracle had a choice, just as we do, whether they would believe or not.

If you need to change your life today, please do so.

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