

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 33

After celebrating the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), Jesus made a journey from Jerusalem across the Jordan River to Bethabara, (John 10:40-42). We are not given details of what happened, but while ministering there many believed in Him.

Raising Lazarus – John 11:1-46

John 11:1-2 NKJV Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

Bethany, the residence of Mary and Martha, was approximately two miles to the east of Jerusalem. Although this is the first mention of Lazarus, it is apparent that he was a friend of the family. Matthew 26 tells of the time when Mary comes and anoints the Lord with fragrant oil and wipes Jesus' feet with her hair. This is not the woman of the city that anointed Jesus feet in the Pharisee's house, (Luke 7:36-48).

John 11:3-4 NKJV Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 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."

John 11:5-6 NKJV Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

When the sisters saw that Lazarus was sick unto death, they called on the Lord. They had an expectation of what would happen. They expected that the Lord would immediately come and heal their brother. They had a special argument for why Jesus should come and help. This whole family had deep faith, trust and love for the Lord. When Jesus heard their plea, He said "this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Jesus was not saying that Lazarus would not suffer and die, but death would not have the final word and he would be raised from the dead. The sisters' expectation of what the Lord would do did not include the events of the next three days. It is obvious that the family had witnessed the Lord's miracles and healings. They expected Jesus to come quickly and alleviate the sickness and problems they were facing, but Jesus did not do what they expected. The Lord said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." The Lord had something greater in mind than what

Mary and Martha could see at the time.

God's timing is not on our schedule.

God does not always work on our schedule or in the way that we perceive would be best. Remember that Jesus said these events around Lazarus' sickness and death would bring glory to the Son of God.

John 11:7-8 NKJV Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"

After the last two events in Jerusalem, the Jews took up stones to stone Him. He healed the man born blind and after He forgave the adulterous woman He said, "I am the Light of the world," (John 8:59; John 10:32). His disciples were not ready to go back into that environment. We should know that God's timing and watchful care over our lives does not always produce the kinds of results we anticipate.

John 11:9-10 NKJV Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

What was Jesus telling them?

The Lord was walking in perfect harmony and obedience to the Father's will and was not in danger of death before His appointed time.

He would be safe until His work was accomplished.

We may also take courage in this that God is in control of the events of our lives and we can fully trust Him.

John 11:11-12 NKJV These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."

John 11:13-15 NKJV However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

Do you find it interesting that the Lord knew that Lazarus was dead and yet, He was going to go to him? Why was he glad for their sakes that He was not there when Lazarus died? Was Jesus happy that Lazarus was dead? If not, why did He say this? What was about to happen would have an amazing and deep impact on the faith of all who witnessed this. When the Lord said, "Nevertheless let us go to him," the disciples were convinced that going back into Judea would result in Jesus' death.

John 11:16 NKJV Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

The disciples were so committed to Christ, they were willing to go die with Him. What Thomas said did not fit in with God’s plan. First, it was not Christ’s time to die. Second, God had a plan for the disciples that was beyond the cross. They did not have the light that Christ had about the future. They were not aware of what the Lord was doing. After hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus waited two days before going to Bethany. Bethabara was twenty to thirty miles from Bethany. This required at least a day’s journey on foot.

John 11:17–19 NKJV So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 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.

This was a common occurrence for friends and the community to come together to mourn the death of a friend and loved one.

Listen closely to Martha’s dialogue with Jesus.

John 11:20-22 NKJV Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, 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 You.”

What is she saying? Martha believed that Jesus had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus recognized her faith and trust, but he wanted her to increase her faith.

John 11:23–24 NKJV Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

What she heard was not what Jesus said. What Jesus said should be compared with what He told His disciples two days earlier. Jesus told His disciples, “I go that I may wake him up.” He told Martha, “Your brother will rise again.” Why is it easier to believe in the resurrection in the last day than raising the dead today? Too often we think the events we face are so dramatic and final that nothing can change them. You should know that with God nothing shall be impossible.

John 11:25–27 NKJV Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and 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.”

What was Jesus saying to Martha? The immediate need that they were facing is possible because the “Resurrection and the Life” is present. Jesus was talking about two stages of the resurrection that is to come. First, those who die shall live again. Second, those who are living in Christ shall not have to die to be resurrected. This was a critical statement for what Jesus was about to do for this family. Martha said, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” Her confession of faith in Jesus was made before Lazarus was raised.

We are about to get a glimpse of the humanity of Christ in the next few verses.

John 11:28–29 NKJV 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.” As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

John 11:30–31 NKJV Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha 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.”

John 11:32 NKJV 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.”

Notice the depth of confidence Mary had in Jesus’ ability to heal the sick.

John 11:33–36 NKJV 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?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”

Why did Jesus groan in the spirit and was troubled? Why did Jesus weep? Jesus’ groaning and weeping is a human response to loss and death. This demonstrated the true humanity of Christ. The Lord’s knowledge of what was about to happen did not keep Him from deep emotion at the death of a loved one. It is not wrong for a Christian who has hope of the resurrection to feel grief, loss and show deep emotion at

the death of loved ones. Even when we sorrow and have grief when a believer dies, we have hope.

John 11:37 NKJV And some of them said, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”

Often we do not understand God’s timing or the events of life. Jesus could have kept Lazarus from dying, but He was going to do something before their eyes that would bring greater hope and faith.

Notice that Jesus’ humanity did not interrupt the miracle.

John 11:38–39 NKJV 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 four days.”

Why did Jesus tell them to “take away the stone?” He could have commanded the stone to roll away. God does not usually do for us what we can do for ourselves. Sometimes before we can have the miracle that God wants to do in our lives, we have to roll away the stone. When they rolled away the stone, Lazarus was dead inside. Martha expressed horror at what they would face when the grave was opened. Jesus was not hindered in any way by what lay inside the grave. Everyone in the community knew that Lazarus had been dead four days.

John 11:40 NKJV Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

Throughout the depth of human emotion, Jesus knew that Lazarus would live again.

John 11:41–42 NKJV Then they took away the stone from the place 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, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.”

This prayer indicates that Jesus had been interacting with the Father throughout this event. Often we do that. We may not be praying out loud but on the inside our troubled soul is crying out to God. Jesus prayed audibly so the people might believe.

John 11:43–44 NKJV Now 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. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

This is one of the few instances where Jesus cried out with a loud voice.

You should know that if He had simply cried out, “Come forth!” all of the graves would have opened. Notice that Lazarus came out of the tomb bound hand and foot with grave clothes. They would wrap a body tightly with cloths and spices to prepare the body after death. Lazarus came out bound from head to toe. Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.” Take those grave clothes off of him. Many of the onlookers recognized that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God and they believed in Him. Some of the Jews that witnessed this miracle were unwilling to accept Jesus as the Messiah, so, they went to the council of the Pharisees to report what happened. When the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered, they began looking for ways to put Jesus to death, (John 11:45-53).

John 11:54 NKJV 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 remained with His disciples.

The next verse mentions the Passover of the Jews was near. This was the Passover that Jesus was to be crucified.

Why did Mary and Martha think that Jesus would heal Lazarus?

Why would Jesus weep when He knew the plan that He had to raise Lazarus from the dead?

Why did Lazarus’ being raised affect the Pharisees and chief priests so negatively?

What does Lazarus’ being raised say to us?