**THE RAISING OF LAZARUS**

***The Miracle That Led to the Cross***

***John 11***

Sunday School Lesson 15

*The Miracles of Jesus*

04/21/2019

**Introduction:** In the final lesson in our review of the miracles of Jesus, we will look at the raising of Lazarus. Following the cleansing of the ten lepers, the Lord’s trip to Jerusalem ended with the Jewish leaders attempting to stone Him. Knowing that His time was not yet at hand, Jesus departed into the region beyond the Jordan River. This was the place that His ministry first started with His baptism by John the Baptist. The people in the region readily received the Lord and believed in Him. The rural valley area offered the perfect winter haven for Christ and His disciples before His journey back into Judaea to be crucified. This same area was also used by the prophet Elijah when the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel sought for his life. As the springtime came, news came to Jesus of the deathly sickness of Lazarus. Jesus knew that this situation would be the one that ushered in the events leading to His death. His disciples warned Him not to go back to Judaea. They weren’t just worried for the life of Jesus; they feared for their own lives. When the Lord told them that He was going and that Lazarus was already dead, Thomas was especially fearful and frustrated. He spoke frankly: “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” Not only did the Lord go to see Lazarus, but He waited two additional days to assure that the Jews from Jerusalem were there and would see the magnitude of the miracle that He performed. This miracle was a preview of what was to come with the Lord’s own resurrection. His followers would have their faith and patience tested, but their dismay would ultimately be turned into an abundance of joy. There are several signs of Christ’s resurrection that are found in the raising of Lazarus, and we will observe those signs in this lesson.

1. LAZARUS’ RESURRECTION SHOWS THE POWER THAT JESUS HAS OVER DEATH. (4, 25)
2. **Notice that the Lord sent a message that the sickness was not unto death (vs. 4).** When Jesus heard the news of Lazarus’ sickness, He sent word back to Mary and Martha that the sickness was not unto death. It would have taken two days for that message to be received by the women. In the meantime, Lazarus died on the same day that the messenger reached Jesus. This means that Lazarus had already been dead for two days when the sisters heard the report back from the messenger. This message must have been confusing to them. Jesus said that the sickness was not unto death, but Lazarus was already dead. Certainly, the women knew of the two people that Jesus had already raised back to life, but where was He now? Did He not realize the severity of the situation or know that Lazarus was going to die? The key is the word “unto.” Death was not the finishing result of the sickness. It was not the finality of Lazarus’ story. The same is true of Jesus’ trip to Calvary.
3. **Notice that Jesus reminded Martha that all those who believe will live unto life and not unto death (vs. 24-26).** When Jesus spoke to Martha regarding her brother, He told her plainly that her brother would rise again. She assumed that the Lord was referring to that final resurrection of the dead. Jesus told her that He was the resurrection and the life. In other words, He had the power to resurrect anyone at any time because life came from and through Him. If she believed in the resurrection that will take place in the last day, she should have easily believed that the Lord could resurrect her brother then and there. It was important to Jesus that Mary, Martha, and the disciples understood that He had power over death. For a while now, He had been teaching them that He would have to go to the cross and die. Knowing that the Lord had power over death should have weakened the sting of that death for His followers. He even told His disciples in verse 15 that He was glad for them that Lazarus was dead. Truthfully, He could have easily offered healing when news reached Him of Lazarus’ sickness, but this was a part of His greater plan.
4. LAZARUS’ RESURRECTION SHOWS THE POWER THAT JESUS HAS OVER THE GRAVE. (17, 39)
5. **Notice the significance of the time that Lazarus spent in the grave (vs. 17).** We might wonder what the difference is between death and the grave. 1 Corinthians 15:55 shows us that the Lord conquered both death and the grave. If we consider the first two times that Jesus raised someone back to life, we will notice that He showed victory over death but not over the grave. Neither person had been buried yet. Their death had just recently occurred. The finality of it had not yet set in on those who loved and cared for those people. Simply, we understand that the grave offers that closure for those left behind. There is generally no coming back from being in the tomb or under the ground. The Jewish leaders of that day had also introduced a new teaching to the people regarding death. They stated that the soul did not leave the body until the conclusion of the third day following death. This new teaching was clearly a way to counter the resurrections that Jesus had already performed. In their minds, the widow’s son and Jairus’ daughter were not totally dead, so the miracle was not as impressive. There may have been cases of people coming back to life after seeming to be dead. We know that this still occurs occasionally today, even in this modern day of medicine. This is why the Jewish leaders gathered for a secret, emergency meeting after the resurrection of Lazarus. Their new teaching did not solve the problem any longer.
6. **Notice that corruption had generally set in by the fourth day (vs. 39).** When Jesus told Martha to have them remove the stone covering the cave, Martha hesitated. She responded: “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.” While the ailment had already corrupted Lazarus to the point that it caused him to die, Lazarus’ body would now be filled with corruption. Further, we know that sin sets the corruption of our flesh in motion from the moment that we are born. Thankfully, what has been sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:42). This shows us the power that Jesus has over the grave. It is not just that He is able to save our souls, but He is able to save our bodies from the grave. Even more, we can consider that the body of Jesus saw no corruption in His own time in the grave, even though He was there for three days and three nights (Acts 13:37). Although He took upon the sins of the world, His body still did not see the corruption that all of humanity faces in our current condition. What an amazing Saviour!
7. LAZARUS’ RESURRECTION SHOWS THE POWER THAT JESUS HAS OVER THE WILL. (4-6, 32)
8. **Notice the love that Jesus had for the family of Lazarus, yet He stayed for two days (vs. 4-6).** Imagine receiving news that one of your dear friends was at the point of death. Would you not rush to go and see that person before it was too late? Throughout John 11, there is an emphasis placed on the fact that Jesus loved Lazarus and his family. We have looked at many miracles during this series, and there has not been one that emphasized a personal affection for the person involved like this one. Of course, we know that Jesus loved all of the people, so this affection was not mentioned as a means to show a priority for Lazarus over others whom Jesus helped. Instead, it must serve another purpose. That purpose is to show us the Lord’s restraint. In spite of His great love for Lazarus, He had to let him die. In spite of His love for Mary and Martha, He had to let them suffer in grief for several days. This would have been tremendously painful. Yet, it was necessary to fulfill the will of the Father. This is a clear sign to the same control that He showed in the garden of Gethsemane. As the suffering and embarrassment of the cross drew near, Jesus stayed grounded in His submission to the Father’s will. Think of how many strong and “good” men have succumbed in the face of tremendous pressure throughout history.
9. **Notice that Jesus followed the plan despite the will of others (vs. 8, 32).** As mentioned in the introduction, the disciples did not want to go back to Judaea. They tried to convince Jesus not to go, but He was not deterred. Then, we see the response from Mary and Martha. Both of them accused Jesus for not being there when they needed Him. Why didn’t He submit to their will and show up when they wanted? That’s just not the way the Lord works. As much as we would like Him to submit to our wills and desires, this will never happen. We must submit our will to Him. The Pharisees desired to capture Him after this, but He had His own timing and plan. The disciples did not want Him to go to the cross at all, but it was not about their plan. No one could manipulate or force Him to do anything that He was not willing to do. This is an important truth because it proves that the Lord willingly gave up His life on the cross. He was not forced to do it. He did not have to do it. He chose to do it out of love for the world.
10. LAZARUS’ RESURRECTION SHOWS THE POWER THAT JESUS HAS OVER DOUBT, DENIAL, AND DISAPPOINTMENT. (21-27; 32-45)
11. **Notice the doubt, denial, and disappointment found at the death of Lazarus (21-27).** The disciples doubted regarding what Jesus would do for Lazarus. Martha doubted multiple times. Mary doubted as well. The people from Jerusalem doubted and openly murmured against the Lord. They wondered how He wasn’t able to save Lazarus. Faith was greatly lacking from all those gathered on that day. They might have all left Him right there if things had turned out differently. This was not new. Jesus was constantly dealing with the doubt and disbelief of those around Him.
12. **Notice the change that took place after Lazarus’ resurrection (vs. 32-45).** All of the doubt, denial, and disappointment were gone in a moment when Lazarus came out of the grave. The people were no longer murmuring against Him. Mary and Martha were overjoyed at the return of their brother. Jesus had the power to endure the unbelief because He knew the end of the matter. At the cross, His disciples left Him. They were doubters. They were discouraged and afraid. Yet, their faith quickly returned when the tomb was empty. The powerful message of the resurrection can change the heart of unbelief into an enduring faith.

**Conclusion:** While the miracle of Lazarus being raised gave hope of the Saviour to the people during that day, we can now direct our attention directly to the empty tomb of Jesus today. We can rejoice at the power that He has over death, the grave, the will, and doubt and disappointment. Our Lord is very much alive today. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. If we are lacking, let’s look to Him for the answers to all of life’s problems.