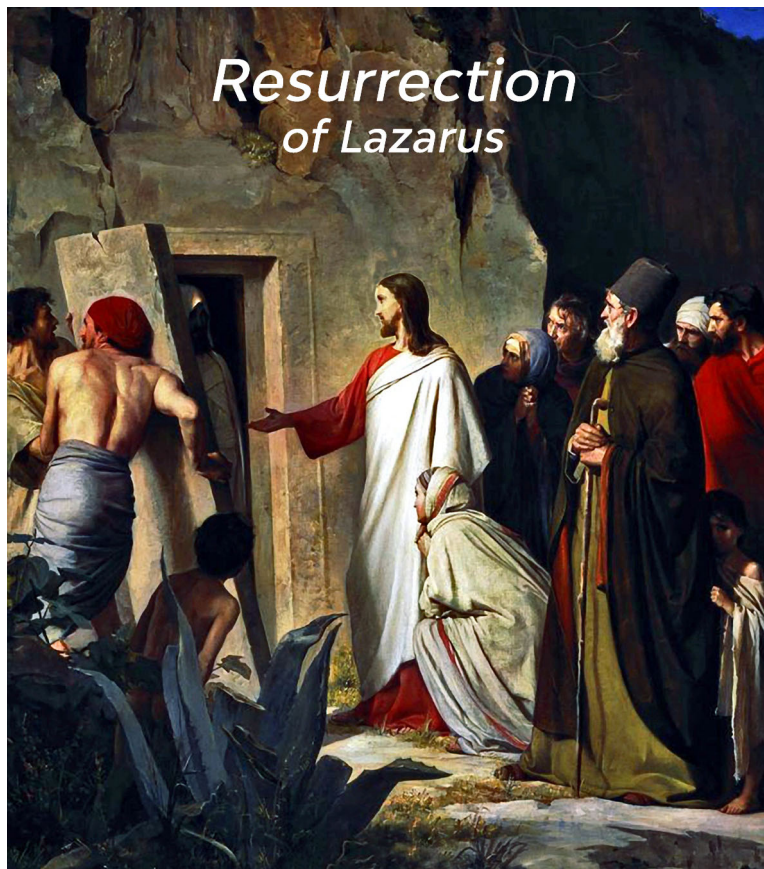


The Resurrection of Lazarus

There are thirty-five miracles recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Only the miracle of the feeding of five thousand men is recorded in all four gospels (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14). Eleven miracles are recorded in three gospels. Five miracles are recorded in two gospels, and eighteen miracles can be found in only one gospel. Only three of the miracles are about the raising of a dead person: the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18, 23-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56), the son of a widow (Luke 7:11-17) and Lazarus (John 11:38-46). A child, a young man and an adult were raised from the dead. The gospel of John recorded eight miracles: water turned into wine (John 2:1-11), child healed from a distance (John 4:46-54), healing of a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-9); feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14), Jesus walked on water (John 6:16-21), healing of a man blind from birth (John 9:1-17); raising of Lazarus (John 11:17-44), the disciples catching fish only on the right-side of the boat (John 21:1-14). All eight miracles in the gospel of John gradually build to a crescendo that reveals the deity of Christ and the eighth miracle that helped the disciples recognize Jesus. Five times the gospel of John called these miracles “signs” (John 2:11; 4:54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47). So what was the purpose of this brief information about the miracles? It is to help us understand that of all the miracles, the death of Lazarus was the final one before Christ’s death. He could have chosen one of the other miracles. In the last three studies, we have learned that Jesus intentionally waited for Lazarus to die. This miracle was planned. It is the climax of His public ministry. It will motivate the religious leaders to crucify Him on the cross! Our study is about the resurrection of Lazarus. Our passage is John 11:38-46.

EMOTIONAL OVER LAZARUS’ RESURRECTION. John 11:11-14 states Jesus was the One who informed the disciples that Lazarus was dead. After Jesus told them that He was glad Lazarus died for their benefit (v. 15), the disciples decided to go with Jesus to Jerusalem and, if necessary, die with Him, for they knew the religious leaders wanted to murder Him (v. 8, 16). So, Jesus and all of the disciples traveled to Bethany. When Christ arrived, Martha ran to Him and declared, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died (v. 21), and later Mary said the same



was going to resurrect Lazarus. The Jews who were with Mary coldly responded with, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?” They were moved when Jesus wept, but then they quickly criticized Him.

When we come to verse 38, some time has elapsed because we are told,

So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. John 11:38 (NASB)

Jesus was deeply, emotionally moved again (v. 33) when He arrived at the tomb. Since the next verse tells us that Martha is present at the tomb also, this suggests that a significant amount of time elapsed between verses 37 and 38. Enough time had elapsed to allow Martha to join them at the tomb!

Verse 38 says that when Jesus came to the tomb He was emotionally moved inside. The Greek word for “deeply moved” is *embrimaomai*. The word refers to “very intense and deep emotion.” Why was Jesus so emotional this time? We are not told, but it is my personal belief that He was anticipating the “cause and effect” of the resurrection of Lazarus. As we will discover in the text study in Luke 11, this miracle will motivate the religious leaders finally to murder Him on the cross. While the resurrection would comfort Mary, Martha, and some of His critics, and cause many to believe in Him, He would finally die. What a mix of emotions He had, but it was all for the glory of God. We do not often read about Jesus being emotional, but it is wonderful to be reminded that Jesus did have emotions.

Next, we are told that the tomb of Lazarus was a cave with a stone laying against it. Today, we usually do not bury people in caves. The custom today is to place the body in a coffin and bury the coffin in the ground. If they are cremated, the ashes might be scattered on the ground, scattered over water, or placed in an urn. Maybe the urn might be placed in a mausoleum. But in Jesus’ day, it was common to bury people in a cave or a sepulcher. Ralph Gower, in *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, explains why Lazarus was so quickly buried in the tomb.

Burial had to take place quickly because the hot climate led to rapid decomposition. However, a burial never took place on a Sabbath or holy day (John 11:39; 19:31). The body was normally washed, wrapped loosely in a linen doth, and carried to the burial place on a wooden stretcher (Luke 7:14, where the stretcher or coffin was used for a sick man). Burial could take place in a natural cave or in an artificially-made one (sepulchre) (Genesis 49:29-32; Judges 8:32). Natural caves were widened and provided with niches or shelves where the bodies could be laid to rest. Because there were limited numbers of caves, when the bodies had decomposed the bones were removed and put into stone

jars called ossuaries. These jars were stored in a comer, and the niches made available for further burials. The mouth of the tomb was sealed either with a disc-shaped stone that ran in an inclined groove in front of the cave or with a boulder that fell into the access hole beneath it. Either way, the stone was extremely difficult to move once it was in place. Burial caves and sepulchres were painted white as a warning to the living that the dead were there (Matthew 23:27). A living person could not always worship God after having had contact with the dead.

...

Exceptionally, a body was covered in spices and in paste, and these were tied to the body by layers of white “roller bandage.” The paste hardened and impregnated the bandages until a hard preservative mould or cocoon was formed about the body. A cap was put on the head, and often the jaw was held in position by a bandage under the chin. This was done for Jesus by two wealthy men, following the initial burial in the simple sheet (John 19:40). In Lazarus’s case, his hands and feet seem to have been tied together before he was covered with a sheet. His jaw was tied by a bandage (John 11:44).¹

BELIEVE YOU SENT ME! Verse 38 helps us understand verse 39.

Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.” John 11:39 (NASB)

When Jesus ordered the stone rolled away, Martha objected. Her experience was that four days after death the corpse of an individual would have a stink. The Greek word for “stink” is *ozo*. It refers to a “foul-smell.” Her simple statement reveals that she did not understand Jesus planned to raise Lazarus from the dead. This was a necessary step to resurrecting him. Is it possible that she did not believe Jesus could raise the dead?

Then Jesus reminded her that He had said if she believed, she would see the glory of God.

Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will

1. Ralph Gower. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*. Moody Publishers. 2005. pp. 69-70.

see the glory of God?” John 11:40 (NASB)

Jesus did not mean that if she had faith, He would be able to raise Lazarus from the dead. Her faith did not empower His ability to do a miracle. Yet, some teach that. They as much as claim that God cannot heal unless we believe. They do not realize they are saying we are the magic switch that enables God to perform miracles. Instead, Jesus’ point was that those who have faith in Christ will understand the miracle is a miracle. The miracle is the work of God, and God will be glorified! But unbelievers and critics reject the miracle as being a miracle or work of God. Unbelievers and critics find some reason to reject the miracle as accomplished by God.

A good example is what we observe in our political elections. Some voters will reject any positive news about a candidate because they are opposed to the individual. They are *not truly objective*. They are *not committed to truth*. They are simply looking for proof that they are correct and reject any evidence that would force them to change their opinion. *To change one’s view would be an admission that one had been wrong!* The root problem is in their hearts. The Pharisees and Sadducees had the same problem. They were not seeking truth either! Their hardened hearts were calloused with hatred for Christ. So everything that they saw and heard was viewed from a negative perspective. But Martha did not have a hardened heart.

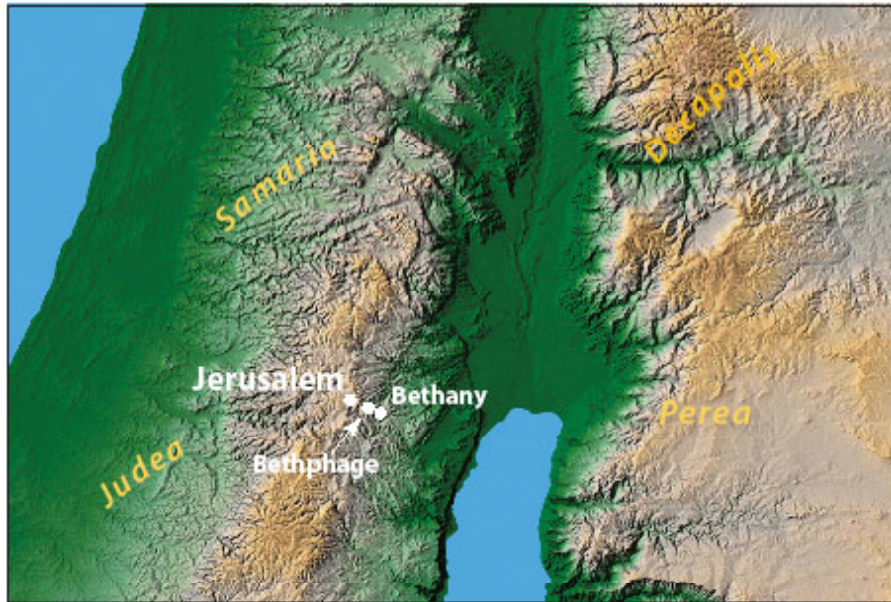
What Jesus actually said was that Martha would glorify God if she would believe that He (Jesus) did miracles. Those who did not believe, would reject any such possibility. That was what Jesus said to her. Martha’s faith did not empower or enable Jesus to do miracles.

Jesus then asked that the stone be removed. Verses 40-41 describe what happened next.

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.” John 11:40-41 (NASB)

Once the stone was rolled away from the tomb, Jesus raised His eyes! Jesus was not often described as raising His eyes to look up to heaven. Jesus looked up to heaven on other occasions

such as when He healed (Mark 7:34), when He blessed food (Luke 9:16), and when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest (John 17:1). On all of these occasions when He raised His eyes to heaven, He spoke out loud, and He did again on this



occasion.

Once again the Son of God while on earth, the second person of the trinity, prayed to God the Father in Heaven. He wanted everyone to know that God the Father had sent Him. This is a message that Jesus repeated in His ministry. Even at the age of twelve Jesus knew the Father had sent Him, for He tells Mary when at the Temple that He had to be in His Father’s house (Luke 2:49). We are told that Mary and Joseph did not understand His comment. That reveals the Father had communicated to Jesus already at the age of twelve. Early in His ministry, He told the disciples that He had been sent by the Father (John 4:34). Surprisingly, Jesus said that if we believe in the Father we have eternal life (John 5:24; 12:45). It is surprising because we often miss the fact that when we

believe in Jesus, it is because God the Father has given us the faith (Ephesians 2:8; 2 Peter 1:1). So, when we believe Jesus, we will also believe in the Father. It is a “package deal.” Then Jesus repeatedly told people that the Father had sent Him (John 5:36-38; 6:38-39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 12:49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 20:21). Even in Jesus’ high priestly prayer to the Father, He said repeated “You sent Me” to the Father four times (John 17:8, 18, 23, 25). In John 16:5, Jesus expressed surprise that the disciples were not rejoicing that He was returning to the Father, who had sent Him. I wonder what it was like for Jesus to be in heaven with the Father before He came to earth? What was it like to return to heaven? Now the reason I listed all of these references was not to try to be exhaustively complete, but to reveal that Jesus’ entire ministry was one of submission to the Father and for the glory of the Father. Remember in John 10:17-18, Jesus told the disciples that the Father loved Him because He had volunteered to lay down His life.

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. John 10:17-18 (NASB)

How different it is for us to realize that the Father and Son talk with each other and love each other, and yet, are one in their very nature. The [Chalcedonian Creed](#) of A.D. 325 states that Jesus was “of one substance with the Father.” Yet, God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are being given a glimpse into the glorious relationship that exists in the incomprehensible Trinity.

So, Jesus thanked God the Father publicly so that the people knew He was talking to the Father. He did it “so that they may believe that You sent Me.” As a result, the Father would be glorified if they believed the Father sent Him.

LAZARUS IS RESURRECTED. Then verse 43 tells us that Jesus resurrected Lazarus with a command.

When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” John 11:43 (NASB)

Notice Jesus did not touch him. Jesus did not insist that Martha or anyone else had faith. Faith was not required in order for Lazarus to be raised. Jesus simply commanded it to occur. The Greek word for “cried out” is *kraugazo*. It means “to cry aloud” or “to shout” and He did with great volume. It was a very loud shout— “Lazarus, come forth!”

Jesus’ command was simple. The literal Greek is *Lasaros deuro exo*. “Lazarus! Come! Outside!” Three words and a dead man comes outside of the tomb. No one assisted Lazarus up onto some stage. No one touched him. Lazarus did not fall to the ground. No one caught him. There were no theatrics or shouts of “hallelujah” or “amens” heard from the crowd. There was no promise that the healing was now in process and would be completed if they were faithful. Jesus simply shouted loudly, “Lazarus, come forth!” Then Lazarus came out of the tomb.

The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” John 11:44 (NASB)

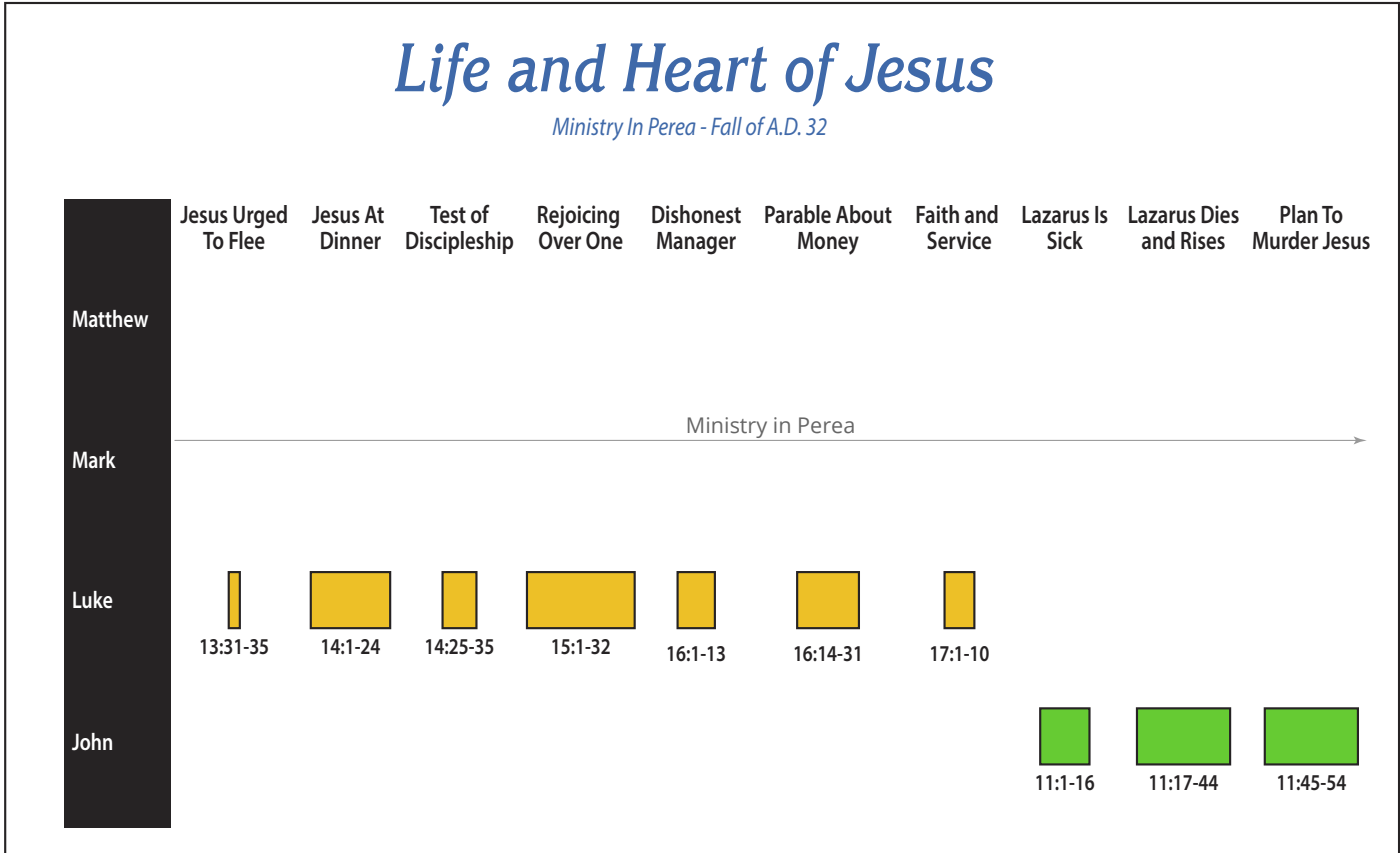
What is truly amazing about this miracle is that Lazarus floated from inside the tomb to the outside of the tomb. We are told that Lazarus’ hands and feet were bound. The Greek word for “bound” is *deo*. It means “to tie” or “to fasten.” Lazarus could not have walked outside the tomb since his feet were tied together. He could not have used his hands in any way to move himself outside the tomb. In addition, he could not have seen where to walk since his face was wrapped with a cloth. The only way he could have come outside was to have floated out. We have never seen this in a modern miracle. When Jesus healed, He did it instantly.

Then Jesus commanded that Lazarus be unbound. This is truly amazing. Jesus asked His critics and those who were not believing in Him to unbind Lazarus. What a fitting conclusion to the miracle this was. Then they could see that Lazarus was actually alive.

NEW BELIEVERS AND OLD CRITICS. As with any miracle that Jesus performed, there are always the few who do believe and the many critics who do *not* want to believe the obvious. John tells us in John 20:30-31 that he documented the miracles so that we would believe in Christ. Then in John

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21:24-25, he tells us that he did not include many things that Jesus did. They who deny Jesus' miracles are spiritually blind and refuse to believe.

On this occasion, some believed and some refused to believe the obvious. Verse 45 says that many believed in Him.

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. John 11:45 (NASB)

The next verse tells us that some people reported this miracle to the Pharisees.

But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. John 11:46 (NASB)

Now we do not know why some individuals reported this miracle to the Pharisees. Were they spies for the Pharisees or just amazed at the miracle? Whatever the answer, this is the miracle that finally motivated the Pharisees to murder Jesus on a cross. Jesus' crucifixion is now only months away.

CONCLUSION. The resurrection of Lazarus is the seventh and last miracle recorded by the apostle John before Jesus is crucified. All of Jesus' miracles revealed that He had control of everything in our world from the ability to turn water into wine, to heal from a distance, to heal a man ill for thirty-eight years, to create food out of nothing, to walk on water, to restore the vision of a man born blind from birth and finally to resurrecting the dead — Lazarus. Jesus' resurrection of Lazarus looked forward to His own resurrection. It looked forward to His own ability to resurrect Himself. For in John 10:18, Jesus told us that He had the authority alone to die and He had the authority to return to life.

No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father. John 10:18 (NASB)

Jesus controlled His life from life to death. So, Jesus revealed His own power over death when He resurrected Lazarus.

When Jesus died on the cross, He conquered death. 2 Timothy 1:10 says Jesus abolished death and brought life.

... but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior
Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel . . . 2 Timothy 1:10 (NASB)

That verse looks forward to what would occur in several months in the future. So, the resurrection of Lazarus was more than just a resurrection of a man, of a brother of Martha and Mary, of Jesus' friend, it revealed Jesus' power to resurrect Himself and give us eternal life with Him in heaven. Praise Jesus!