



**How to Ruin Funerals
Jesus Raises Lazarus
From the Dead
John 11:1-46**

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When we were last with Jesus here in John, He had just told the Jewish religious leadership that He is God. No doubt was left, no question was left, He stated this very clearly.

John 10:30
"I and the Father are one." (NASB 2020)

He then gave further evidence to them that He is indeed Messiah and He is much more than just a man. And they, for the most part, didn't believe Him at all. They want Him dead. They have asked for signs, which they received and ignored. They asked for a statement and got it but now, they want Him dead.



Then Jesus and His team simply walked away going to a location on the Jordan River that all would know since it was the same location that John the Baptist used. We do not know if Jesus is still there at this point, but some scholars assume He is still there.

The actions we are going to study today are the one step further to support His argument that He is God.

Jesus will now go one further, He said to the Jewish leadership to “believe the works, so that you may know and understand the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” They did not want to do that even in the face of irrefutable evidence and now Jesus will produce the crowning achievement miracle of His earthly ministry.

This will be one they will not be able to run away from. But we will learn one more lesson about the deception of Satan and how impervious those who are in His control are from the truth.

John 11:1–6

“Now a certain man was sick: Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not meant for death, but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” (Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.) So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.” (NASB 2020)

Have you ever needed a word from the Lord and needed it right now? The situation you are praying about is urgent and you or I feel like we need an answer right now.

For me, the recent experience of starting up Calvary Chapel, I found myself tempted to to pray in such a manner. Things were urgent, in my mind but maybe not in the plan of the Lord. I needed to hear from Him now. But here is the thing, the Lord will glorify Himself and do so consistently. Sometimes that means not answering when we want. He does answer prayer, yes, no or wait. We must remember that as we pray and wait on Him.

Here at Calvary, we needed a place to begin to meet and ran into roadblock after roadblock regarding a space to do so. Not having the cash to rent a place was also a problem, or so we thought. We were trusting in the Lord to supply a place. One of the brothers who has been helping us gave a prophecy that we would have a place to meet lined up by the end of June. He gave this in the middle of May.

Fast forward to June 30th, at 4:30 in the afternoon, and I received a phone call from the Taylor’s offering us this place we are now meeting in. A miracle of God.

Did I like waiting on the Lord? No. But God’s timing is not mine and, in the end, He will ensure that He is the one who receives the glory, and He will not share it with anyone else. This is just one of the miracle stories connected with Calvary Chapel and we are waiting right now for the next one to take place.

He is the one who will grow the church, bring those to serve, meet our needs financially and give us a place to meet. I am looking forward to seeing how He will do it, but for now, we remain faithful and wait on the Lord. This is not called an adventure in faith for nothing.

Are we attacked? Yes, Am I frustrated, not with the Lord or with waiting, but with the attacks, yes. But we will get treated no better than the Lord was treated. He is more than enough. Back to our text.

Here is the deal, Lazarus is deathly ill, and his sisters, who are caring for him, send a message to the one person who can heal him, Jesus. Lazarus lives in Bethany, a small suburb of Jerusalem located on the



eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Today Bethany sits adjacent to a security fence built by Israel and is difficult to get to.

During the time of Jesus though, it was not hard to get to.

It is reached from Jerusalem (from which it is distant two short miles) by a rough bridle-path, winding over bare rock and loose stones. Its name, “the place of dates,” seems to hint that it stood originally in the midst of palm-trees. (Exell n.d., 233)

The house of Martha, that of Simon the leper, and the tomb of Lazarus, are still pointed out to visitors. The last is a deep vault, hewn out of the solid rock, in the very edge of the village. (Exell n.d., 233)

They do not ask for Jesus to hurry and come to Bethany to heal him. They simply inform the Lord of the situation and then leave it up to Him. They are exercising faith that the Lord, informed, will always make the right decision and do the right thing.

If we consider their request a prayer, then it is one to look at carefully because they simply inform the Lord but do not provide instructions for Him as to what to do. Getting the message to Jesus probably took a day or two alone, especially if He was along the Jordan River at John the Baptist’s old stomping grounds.

We are told that this family is one that Jesus is close to. They know who Jesus is and to make sure we know who they are, John identifies Mary as the one who will later anoint the Lord with ointment and wipe His feet with her hair. We are not told how old Lazarus is, but since the parents are not mentioned, it appears that the two women are now taking care of their brother who might be younger than them since if he was first born, it would have been the other way around.

So, what does Jesus do when He receives the prayer request from the women? By the way, that is what it is. I mean Jesus has a close relationship with Lazarus as he is referred to as one whom You love. He dropped everything and headed to Bethany, right? Wrong.

First, He say something to the messengers.

John 11:4

“But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not meant for death, but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”” (NASB 2020)

But it doesn’t tell us that He said that to the disciples. Most likely that is what He told the messengers who then returned back to Mary and Martha with that word.

He didn’t pack up, tell the disciples to saddle up, or even send a message back saying on our way. He stayed where He was.

John 11:5–6

“(Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.) So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.” (NASB 2020)

We are going to discover that when Jesus arrives, Lazarus did indeed die and had been dead for 4 days. He may already be dead when the messenger arrived.



But Jesus does nothing for two more days, or so we think because the text is silent. Jesus, at this point, has been rejected as Messiah by the nation.

It is sometime between December and April; we don't know when. Jesus has been rejected by the nation and for the most part, His public ministry is over. "His works were rejected in John 5:16; His words were rejected in John 8:58–59; and His Person was rejected in John 10:30–31." (McGee 1997, 435) He is busy preparing His disciples for the future because He knows there is not a lot of time left.

Jesus waits, to pray, and to also provide for the optimum opportunity for the Son of God to be glorified. That is the real reason why Jesus delays, to optimize this opportunity to give the religious leaders in Jerusalem no quarter at all, no place to hire. He will confront them with a work that the world will look on in amazement at their profound ignorance.

So, two days go by without a mention at all to the disciples. Then He tells them without telling them everything at first.

Ever start a conversation with someone who does not have a clue about what you are talking about? Worse yet, inform a group of an action that is going to take place with zero context about the details regarding the why? Welcome to the military.

I have been on the receiving end of orders that make you go, "hmmm." Then you just do what you have been told to do. Unfortunately, I have also had to be the giving end of those kinds of orders as well. Sometimes the need to know, just doesn't seem to go all the way down to those who are the doers. You pack your bags not knowing where you are going or how long you will be there.

You get on board the plane and notice someone has loaded the desert gear onto the pallet in the middle of the plane and then, after taking off, you are told. You are going to be camping in the sand for awhile.

Watch the interaction that takes place with the disciples when He tells them.

John 11:7–10

"Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let's go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and yet You are going there again?" Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks during the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." (NASB 2020)

Let's put ourselves in the place of the disciples. Two or so months ago, they left the Temple with the religious leadership wanting to kill Jesus right then and there. It isn't paranoia if it is true.

Jesus is a dead man walking in Judea, which is why He is currently on the other side of the Jordan River. It is not yet His time. The time is drawing near, but not quite yet.

So, when Jesus suddenly announces, "let's go to Judea," they are more than incredulous. The reaction tells us this. Let me paraphrase. "What? They were just trying to kill you there. Why?" They didn't question His sanity, but they walk right up to the line since if there is a reason to do this, He will tell them. And His first set of remarks still leaves them speechless. But I am sure the body language spoke quite loudly. Jesus picks up on it.

John 11:11

"This He said, and after this He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going so that I may awaken him from sleep." (NASB 2020)



I love the sense of humor that Jesus has. It also reflects God's true attitude towards death. We think of it as a final thing, not Jesus. He calls it sleep. This has caused some to adhere to a false doctrine called soul sleep. That is not what is being discussed here at all.

For those who cling to this false view, they take "the meaning of soul sleeping is that upon death the soul, the immaterial part of man, goes into unconscious sleep and the person who dies remains totally unconscious in body and soul until the resurrection." (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 15)

But there is a reason why Jesus uses this term, and His use is Biblically consistent.

Whenever the Bible speaks of death in the sense of sleep, it is always used of the physical body and not the soul, because the appearance of a sleeping body and a dead body look very much the same. So when the Bible speaks of sleep in the sense of death, it is only used of the body, not the soul.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that whenever the Bible uses the term "sleep" in reference to death, uniquely, it is never used of unbelievers. It is a term used only of believers, which shows God's viewpoint of the death of a believer. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 17)

From God's perspective, which Jesus is reflecting here, the death of a believer is temporary suspension of physical activity, not spiritual. For us as New Testament believers, once we breathe our last here on planet earth, we are immediately met with an escort and off to be with Jesus. Jesus is the one who said this.

Luke 16:22

"The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried," (ESV)

Jesus explains that the poor man, another Lazarus, was escorted by angels, not one but plural, to paradise.

This is another teaching moment for the disciples, and for us too.

Yet to come, Jesus will teach the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, a similar lesson when He tells them "He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong." (Mark 12:27, ESV)

Did the disciples understand what Jesus was saying? Possibly, but remember, they know that the religious leadership want Him dead, and maybe them too.

John 11:12–15

"The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will come out of it." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about actual sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus died, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let's go to him." (NASB 2020)

Jesus wants to teach them a lesson, death is not the end. They will need to know this and hang onto it just a few months from this point because of the cross. He is already trying to prepare them for His death and resurrection, death for the believer is not the final event. Paul will point that out later, it is simply a beginning.

1 Corinthians 15:42–49

"This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When



buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body. There is, of course, a physical body, so there has to be a spiritual body. For the scripture says, “The first man, Adam, was created a living being”; but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit. It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven. Those who belong to the earth are like the one who was made of earth; those who are of heaven are like the one who came from heaven. Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven.” (GNB)

The disciples were already “believers,” or they would not have been “disciples”; but faith is always growing, if it be alive, and the Twelve knew that theirs was susceptible of increase (cf. Lk. 17:5). Although His friend has died and the sisters are in grief, Jesus rejoices because of His confidence not only that Lazarus will be called back to life, but because this sign of power will increase the faith of His disciples, and promote the glory of God (v. 4). (Bernard 1929, 379-380)

Leave it to Thomas to give us a snarky retort, in the Bible no less.

John 11:16–19

“Therefore Thomas, who was called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s also go, so that we may die with Him!” So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia away; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them about their brother.” (NASB 2020)

Sarcasm from Thomas does not stop the trip from happening but does show us that the disciples are real people with real emotions still processing what they are hearing and seeing. Oh, and he also is being prophetic as all the disciples with the exception of John do indeed die as martyrs.

Jesus and the disciples make the trip and as they arrive, they discover that Lazarus has been dead for four days and he has already been placed into a tomb. How close are they to Jerusalem, less than two miles on the back side of the Mount of Olives. About an hour or so walk to the eastern gate of the Temple. Four days is significant. The Mishnah relates that there is a Jewish belief at the time the soul stays near the body for three days hoping to return to it.

But on the fourth day it sees decomposition setting in and leaves it finally. If this view was as early as the time of which we are thinking (it is attested c. A.D. 220 but is probably a good deal earlier) it will mean that a time had been reached when the only hope for Lazarus was a divine act of power. (Morris 1995, 485)

When we read “many of the Jews had come,” we are being told that some of the religious leadership are on the scene during the mourning period.

Mourning the dead was a big deal in Judaism at this time. There were even professional mourners who could be hired to ensure that the right amount of lamentation and mourning was taking place.

Some of the mourners may have been at the tomb outside of town as Jesus arrived. We don’t know but the message got back to the women that Jesus made it to town.

John 11:20–21

“So then Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” (NASB 2020)



Somehow, through the grapevine, Martha found out Jesus was approaching Bethany, so she goes out to see Him. Is she mad at Jesus? Upset with Him taking so long to get back? Possibly.

When you look at the time frame involved though, Jesus did not receive the message until Lazarus was dead. If the journey was a day to get to Him, and He waited two more days, He is now arriving on the fourth day. Lazarus was already dead when Jesus heard the news of the illness.

Martha does not know this, she is an upset sister and probably also protecting her sister who is still at home sitting shiva. "Because Lazarus has been in the tomb four days (11:17), the most intense mourning period of sitting shiva (i.e., seven days) remains in effect. Palestinian Judaism required burial of the deceased on the day of death, but six days of mourning (for a total of seven) followed, in which the bereaved family members would remain at home while others came to supply food and express sympathy." (Keener 2012, 842-843)

The expected behavior. According to the culture, would be that Martha and Mary would both remain at home during this period and Jesus would come to her. Possibly she is still upset He did not come earlier, or she may also be concerned for Jesus knowing about the death threats just 2 miles away and His being there was dangerous.

She had placed Jesus in a box though. She had expectations of what He would do and how He would perform, and she is upset enough to tell Him this as she meets with Him.

But she is still a woman of faith.

John 11:22–27

"Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise from the dead." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have come to believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, and He who comes into the world." (NASB 2020)

Martha has the faith that Jesus could have prevented the death and healed her brother. But he has been dead four days now.

But Martha also believes, she knows who Jesus is and His character that reflects the Father. She has heard that teaching and she has believed. She is not expecting Jesus to raise him from the dead now, even as Jesus speaks of the resurrection, she is confident she will see her brother again.

But Jesus wants her to take the next step in faith and believe personally, that He is the resurrection and the life. She responds with a statement of faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. For her, she has reached the point that Jesus is indeed God capable of anything.

Time to get sister.

John 11:28–32

"When she had said this, she left and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard this, she got up quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still at the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house and were consoling her, when they saw that Mary had gotten up quickly and left, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there. So when Mary came to the place



where Jesus was, she saw Him and fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”” (NASB 2020)

Martha sends word in secret about Jesus being in town. There is indeed fear for Him being so close to Jerusalem. Mary reacts but immediately going to Jesus. She is in despair, but when told Jesus is waiting, she knows where she needs to be, with Jesus. Just like us. When we are in turmoil, despair, mourning, that is who we need to be with, Jesus.

Mary arrives and immediately goes to worship Jesus falling at His feet. Yet even she has Jesus in a box trying to limit and dictate how He will operate.

We do this over and over again. We think too small. Who knows what the Holy Spirit wants to do? We need to allow Him the space to do what He wants to do.

Seeing Martha and Mary’s reaction to the death of Lazarus hits Jesus hard. He is the creator. He knows when death entered into the story for man. He was there when Adam and Eve explained what happened and repented yet the one thing He did not want to enforce, He had too due to His own holiness. That was death. Spiritual and physical. Jesus is moved as all of this passes through His mind.

John 11:33–37

“Therefore when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!” But some of them said, “Could this man, who opened the eyes of the man who was blind, not have also kept this man from dying?”” (NASB 2020)

There is a unique word used in the Greek here where it says “He was deeply moved in the spirit.” The word is ἐνεβριμήσατο (enebrimesato). This is an unusually strong term.

Here is the thing about this word, is its use is “usually denoting anger, agitation, and typically some physical expression accompanying it (cf. Mark 1:43; 14:5).” (Keener 2012, 846)

Yes, He is deeply moved. What Satan did to man is the reason why Jesus is there. Satan is indeed a murderer and Lazarus is one more victim. Some commentators think anger overstates the case; I do not agree. I believe that the creator is moved, angry even over what it is that sin has caused to happen in His creation.

We also see in this how much Jesus loves us. His anger, as reflected here as tears over what it is that sin and unbelief has brought to creation, shows His character and reveals His mission and why He is more than willing to go to the cross for all of us.

We also see the continuing unbelief of those who simply will not believe no matter what. Their comments reflect the same box that Martha and Mary tried to put God into. We need to expect the Lord to move on behalf of His people and do so with POWER. WE need to pray expecting the Lord perform miracles on our behalf. As we pray for our church, we pray expecting revival and a movement of the spirit that will blow our minds.

Jesus asks where Lazarus is buried, and all they think is He simply wants to mourn at the grave for Him. He has much more in mind than that.



John 11:38–40

“So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”” (NASB 2020)

Unlike the Egyptians who embalmed, the Jewish practice was to use spices, but after four days, the spices would no longer be sufficient to cover up the smell of decomposition. Decomposition was encouraged in this culture so a reburial of the bones to an ossuary could take place in a year or so.

Hearing Jesus command to remove the stone shocks Mary. His command is short and terse. She is not expecting what Jesus is going to do, raise Lazarus from the dead and she protests. But when Jesus refers back to the words sent back to her via messenger, she remembers what the message said. The Son of God would be glorified. So, she lets them remove the stone. Jesus is determined and, on a mission, to glorify God.

John 11:41–44

“So they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. But I knew that You always hear Me; nevertheless, because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.” And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” Out came the man who had died, 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.”” (NASB 2020)

The posture of prayer in that culture was to lift your face or eyes to heaven. He intentionally speaks out loud as well.

Jesus is obedient to the Father, and this is something they have already talked about. God is going to act, but prayer first. And this is not the first time Jesus and the Father have discussed Lazarus. God acts based on our prayer. I have seen God do miracles, but through prayer. Jesus thanks the Father for listening to Him. Jesus reflects perfect faith for us.

Jesus has told the religious leadership that His sheep hear His voice. Now He will prove it.

John 10:27

“My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;” (NASB 2020)

While our Lord used different methods to perform His miracles of healing, his method of raising the dead was always the same. He called to them and spoke to them as if they heard Him. Do you know why He did that? Because they heard Him! I think that when He returns with a shout, every one of us will hear his own name because He will call us back from the dead. (McGee 1997, 436)

We tend to think, based on our reading of the scriptures, that Jesus only raised three people from the dead. I think He did way more than that.

There were potentially multitudes raised from the dead, healed of blindness or other diseases. John himself tells us that at the end of this book.

John 21:25.

“But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.” (NASB 2020)



Jesus comments sent back to John the Baptist when he inquired from prison point that direction as well.

Luke 7:22

“And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” (ESV)

Each person that Jesus brought back to life, would die again later. None of them were resurrected into glorified bodies, but they were restored to the life they had in the body they had.

In each of the accounts we have of people being restored to life, there is another common denominator, none of those brought back said thank you. The families, yes. But the person, no.

After such a magnificent and unheard-of miracle, way beyond healing a man born blind, all believed, right? Not entirely.

John 11:45–46

“Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.” (NASB 2020)

Where do you fall on this miracle. Are you one of His sheep already following Him or are you on the outside looking in and wondering about all of this. Today is the day to resolve the question once and for all.

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