

MIRACLES OF JESUS

LAZARUS (JOHN 11)

Jesus Called to Bethany (vv. 1-16)

Near the end of Jesus’ ministry, he received an emergency request from some friends in Judea. Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, was on the verge of death. His sisters, Mary and Martha, wanted Jesus to come immediately to heal him. Their urgent message was brief and poignant: “He whom you love is sick.”

Because Bethany was so close to Jerusalem, the apostles objected to the idea of making this unexpected trip to Judea. The last time he was in Jerusalem, the Jews had made an attempt on Jesus’ life (John 11:8; cf. 10:22-39). Though they feared the worst, Jesus walked by faith, knowing all would be well.

The messengers had said Lazarus was sick, but Jesus knew he was already dead (v. 14). Jesus intentionally stayed in Perea for two additional days. By the time he and his disciples made it back to Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days (Figure 3). Jewish culture believed that, after four days, death was irrevocable.

Jesus Raises Lazarus

| Jesus’ Journey to Bethany | Citation |
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| 1. Mary and Martha send word to Jesus in about Lazarus’ sickness. | John 11:1-3 |
| 2. Jesus deliberately remains in Perea for two additional days. | John 11:6 |
| 3. Jesus and his disciples travel to Bethany, where he raises Lazarus | John 11:17-44 |
| 4. Eyewitnesses report the event to the Sanhedrin | John 11:46-53 |
| 5. Jesus travels secretly to Ephraim with the disciples | John 11:54 |

Figure 3.

At the Home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (vv. 17-44)

Apparently, Lazarus and his sisters were wealthy and influential citizens of Bethany and as a result, Lazarus’ death had brought many mourners to their home who tried to comfort the family. This was a common practice in first-century Jewish culture.

While in the house, Martha and Mary received word that Jesus had finally arrived. Martha made her way to meet him just outside the village. Heartbroken over her brother's death, she could not fathom why Jesus had not hurried to heal Lazarus. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21).

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus told Martha, to which she responded by saying, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (v. 24). Jesus then made an incredible claim about himself: "I am the resurrection and the life" (v. 25).

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who 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 coming into the world" (John 11:25-27).

Martha's amazing declaration of faith revealed her confidence in Jesus. Even though she didn't understand why he delayed coming to Bethany, Martha placed her hope in Jesus nonetheless.

Martha returned to the house, found Mary and told her, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you" (v. 28). Upon approaching Jesus, Mary fell at his feet, weeping. Through her tears, she spoke the same heart-wrenching words that Martha had: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32).

Tears welled up in Jesus' eyes, too. He cried with her, deeply moved in his spirit because of her display of sorrow. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. Together, they walked to the tomb. Even though he knew what he was about to do, Jesus was overwhelmed with emotion and wept for the pain his friends were enduring (v. 35). People standing around watching could see how deeply Jesus loved his friends and was distressed at their pain.

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. ... Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha...said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:38-40).

"If you believed, you would see the glory of God." Martha believed Jesus could raise her brother from the dead in the final resurrection. But because Lazarus has been dead for four days, she did not believe it was possible now. Her faith in Jesus was strong, but she was about to truly believe in him.

After composing himself and wording a prayer, Jesus called out: "Lazarus, come out!" To the amazement of everyone, Lazarus walked out of the tomb, wearing his grave cloths. Lazarus is alive!

