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The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Raising of Lazarus

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

MIRACLE THIRTY: Raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-44)

SURVEY

After comforting Lazarus' grieving sisters, Mary and Martha, in their hour of sorrow following Lazarus' death, and expressing His own personal grief, Jesus visits the tomb of the dead man. He then utters four statements:

- To Martha: *"Take away the stone."*
- To His Father: *"Thank you for hearing me. I do this that those watching may believe that you sent me."*
- To Lazarus: *"Lazarus come out!"*
- To those standing by: *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

SIGNIFICANCE

- More space is given over to this miracle than to any other of the thirty-five performed by Jesus.
- More individuals are mentioned by name here than can be found in any other miracle (Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and Thomas).
- It marks the final of three occasions where Jesus raised someone from the dead. For the first two, see miracles 11 and 16.
- This is the first of three great cries from the lips of the Savior. All three have to do with the glorious subject of resurrection.
 1. The cry from the cemetery: *"Lazarus, come forth."*
 2. The cry from the cross: *"Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."* (Mt. 27:50-52)
 3. The cry from the clouds: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."* (1 Thess. 4:16)
- Humanly speaking, this miracle would lead to the death of Jesus.

"Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." (Jn. 11:53)

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived in Bethany, a little Jewish town two miles east of the Mount of Olives. At least four key events would transpire here in the life of Jesus:
 1. The resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11:44)
 2. His anointing by Mary (Mt. 26:6)
 3. The starting point for His triumphal entry (Mk. 11:1)
 4. His final blessing upon the disciples just prior to the ascension (Lk. 24:50)
- Observe the frequency of the names Lazarus, Mary, and Martha in John 11:
 1. Lazarus is mentioned six times (11:1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 43).
 2. Mary is mentioned seven times (11:1, 2, 19, 20, 28, 31, 32).
 3. Martha is mentioned eight times (11:1, 5, 19, 20, 21, 24, 30, 39).
- The reason for this can be seen by a statement made during Christ's Good Shepherd sermon, preached just prior to this: *"He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."* (Jn. 10:3)
- John, chapter 11, can be favorably compared with John, chapter 9.
 1. In John 9 Jesus used the tragedy of blindness as an opportunity to manifest the power of God.

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (Jn. 9:3)
 2. In John 11 Jesus used the tragedy of death as an opportunity to manifest the glory of God.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (Jn. 11:4)
 3. Both chapters thus refute that terrible lie which claims all suffering is a result of personal sin.
 4. More information is provided regarding these two miracles than any other of the thirty-five Jesus performed.
 5. Both miracles would only further harden the hearts of Jesus' enemies. Note:

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." (Jn. 9:24)

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the

Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation ... Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.” (Jn. 11:47-48, 57)

- Upon hearing of Jesus' decision to attend Lazarus' funeral and raise him from the dead, Thomas expressed grave doubts:

“Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (Jn. 11:16)

The New Testament relates three incidents between Thomas and Christ. The Gospel of John records all three. In each of them he lives up to his reputation as “doubting Thomas.”

1. Here he doubts the power of Christ.
2. In the Upper Room he doubts the promise of Christ.

“Thomas saith unto him, Lord we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (Jn. 14:5)

3. After the resurrection He at first doubted the very person of Christ. (Jn. 20:24-29)

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (Jn. 20:24-25)

- We note that He waited until Lazarus had been dead for four days. He may have done this because of the superstition among the Jews that after death the spirit hovered over the body for three days, and a resurrection up to that time was at least remotely possible. But after this period, all hope was gone.
- Martha, and not Mary, is the heroine of this story. (See Lk. 10:38-42 where the opposite was true.)
 1. It was Martha who went to meet Jesus while Mary remained in the house (Jn. 11:20).
 2. Martha's great testimony here ranks equally as important as that given by Simon Peter on another occasion.
- Both contain similar language, but Martha offered hers under far more difficult circumstances:
 1. Peter's testimony

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt. 16:16)
 2. Martha's testimony

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou

this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” (Jn. 11:25-27)

- Martha's words to Mary here are the most beneficial and blessed ones a believer can give to another believer in the hour of greatest need.

“She went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” (Jn. 11:28)

- Upon meeting Jesus, Mary said the exact same thing Martha had just said:

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died...Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” (Jn. 11:21, 32)

To rephrase the little poem:

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'

- The account tells us of Jesus' sorrow at this time:

“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.” (Jn. 11:33-35)

- This contains the shortest verse in the English Bible, but in some ways it is the longest. This is the first of at least three occasions on which our Lord wept.

1. He wept over the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41).

2. He wept in Gethsemane—*“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” (Heb. 5:7)*

- What caused His tears?

1. He wept because of His true humanity (see Heb. 4:14-16).

2. He wept because of the wicked men He saw around Him (see Jn. 11:37, 46).

3. He wept (according to an early Christian tradition) because He was soon to bring Lazarus back from the bliss of paradise to this earthly vale of tears!

- Twice we read of Jesus groaning (Jn. 11:33, 38). The Greek word here is *embrim*, suggesting anger. It is translated "indignation" in Mk. 14:5. Thus, the groanings of Christ may have indicated His grief and anger over death itself, a tragic (and unnecessary) result of Adam's sin (see Rom. 5:12).

- Standing outside the tomb that contained the body of Lazarus, Jesus gives some specific and pointed instructions.

Here we see an example of that desired cooperation God seeks between the Savior and the soul winner in raising dead sinners to newness of life. Jesus issued three commands in

accomplishing this miracle. The first and third were directed toward the friends of the corpse, while the second was given to the corpse itself. Note:

1. *"Take ye away the stone"* (Jn. 11:39). The job of the soul winner is to first remove all human barriers so that Christ can come in direct contact with a lost person.
2. *"Lazarus, come forth"* (Jn. 11:43). Only Christ, of course, can do this.
3. *"Loose him, and let him go"* (Jn. 11:44). In a word, this speaks of discipleship, that is, ministering to the new convert.