

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#21: “The Raising of Lazarus”

SCRIPTURE: John 11:28-57

INTRO:

Last week we learned that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, died from an illness of some kind. Word was sent to Jesus about his illness before he died, but Jesus purposely delayed in returning to Judea.

As He arrived near Bethany, Martha went to greet Him and said, *“If you had been here, our brother would not have died.”*

In His response to her, Jesus taught that He was *“the resurrection and the life”* and that *“Whoever believes in (him), though he die, yet shall he live.”*

JESUS SENT MARTHA TO TELL MARY HE WISHED TO TALK WITH HER.

He wanted to speak with her in private, but those who were in the house with her followed her when she left. She met Jesus and his disciples just outside the city and fell at His feet, saying, *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”* (v. 32), just as her sister had done.

Deeply moved, Jesus then asked Mary, *“Where have you laid him?”* (v. 34). She and the Jews with her said, *“Come and see.”*

IN VERSE 35, WE HAVE THE SHORTEST VERSE IN THE BIBLE.

“Jesus wept.”

And while He did, some of the Jews said, *“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”* (v. 37).

Of course, he could have. He could have healed his sickness without traveling from Perea to Judea. He could have raised him

from the dead after he died without leaving Perea. But Jesus had something else in mind...

Still, Jesus, as John says, *“was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled”* (vv. 33, 38). Now, why would Jesus feel this way?

The Scriptures tell us that on several occasions Jesus was sad and troubled in spirit. This was the “Son of Man” side of Him. His being rejected by His own people troubled Him. The sinfulness of mankind in general caused Him to weep. The suffering He was about to endure troubled Him greatly and eventually caused Him to sweat blood as he prayed in Gethsemane.

Then,

JESUS, MARY, MARTHA, AND THE CROWD OF JEWS ARRIVE AT THE TOMB OF LAZARUS.

It was a cave with a stone covering the entrance. Jesus told them to take away the stone. Martha cautioned Him that there would be an odor since he had been dead four days.

I understand that when someone dies, the body immediately begins the decomposition process, and the smell of death can begin. The body will begin to smell due to various gases created by microorganisms during the stages of decomposition. In addition to the extremely unpleasant odor, body decomposition fluids can permeate porous materials, which in a home can include carpet, subflooring, walls, concrete, and more, causing a smell that cannot be removed by ordinary cleaning methods.

There are four stages of decomposition of the human body:

1. Autolysis – the body’s flesh membranes release enzymes that begin to consume body cells.
2. Bloat – as the released enzymes begin to function, gasses are produced, causing bloating.

3. Active decay – organs and inner parts start to liquify.

4. Skeletonization – the first three stages result in only the bones being left.

Today we know that in the case of Lazarus the brain would have been hopelessly decayed. The body's cells would have already started to break down and every organ would be beyond useful. When a body is dead for four days it is as dead as Scrooges' door nails. Nothing man can do is going to revive such a body. It is beyond all *earthly* hope. Fortunately, it isn't beyond *all* hope. With God all things are possible.

Jesus said to Martha, *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* Then, they took away the stone. Why? Why take away the stone? One answer is that Jesus commanded the removal of the stone, which was at the mouth of the cave-tomb, so that the miracle might be evident. If Lazarus had just appeared, with the stone still in place, it would have looked more like an apparition than a resurrection. The removal of the stone would allow the onlookers to see Lazarus rise and walk out of the tomb.

Regardless, Jesus lifted his eyes toward heaven and said to His Father, *"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."* He wanted the people to know that what was about to happen was a "God thing." He wanted them to have every reason to believe He was the Christ, God's Son.

Then, He cried out with a loud voice, *"Lazarus, come out!"* Can you imagine the looks on the peoples' faces as Lazarus, wrapped in grave cloth, rose up, then stood up, and then walked out of that tomb? Can you say "mummy"?

Many of those who had come with Mary to the tomb, upon seeing the marvelous miracle, *"believed in him."*

But...

...SOME OF THEM WENT AND TOLD THE PHARISEES WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

So, the chief priests and Pharisees called a special meeting of the Sanhedrin and said to them, ***“What shall we do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”*** (vv. 47-48). In other words, this was a political problem. They were concerned that Rome would consider Jesus and those who followed Him as insurrectionists who needed to be squelched and squashed and send in troops.

But the high priest, Caiaphas, said, ***“You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish”*** (vv. 49-50). As high priest, Caiaphas had prophesied ***“that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad”*** (vv. 51-52).

It was at the time of that prophesy that the Council decided to put Jesus to death. In other words, they condemned Jesus “in absentia.” If this had been the Old West of America, there would be wanted posters everywhere with the likeness of Jesus on them, saying “Wanted Dead or Alive For Blasphemy.”

So,

JOHN TELLS US THAT JESUS NO LONGER WALKED OPENLY AMONG THE JEWS.

Initially, He and His disciples went to a town called Ephraim, where they “hid out” for a time.

When Passover time came, Jews in Jerusalem began to talk among themselves as they wondered if Jesus would show up.

The chief priest and the Pharisees had put out the word that if anyone knew the whereabouts of Jesus, they should contact them. They were going to arrest Him.

Little did the chief priests and Pharisees realize that they were playing right into the hands of the Lord. He wouldn't be available for arrest until the time was right, but that time was fast approaching.

IN CLOSING...

God had a schedule that would lead up to Jesus' crucifixion. He still has a schedule.....that will lead up to Jesus' return.