

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-18-12 AM NOTES
"JESUS GIVES VICTORY OVER DEATH"
JOHN 11:28-44
#42 in Series, "Verse by Verse through John"

Ecclesiastes 3:11b (ESV) "...He has put eternity into man's heart..."

Hebrews 2:15 (NKJV) "and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV) "⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Seven Sign Miracles in John

- The water is turned into wine (John 2:1-11)
- The healing of the son of a nobleman (John 4:46-54)
- The healing of a man who had been an invalid for 38 years (John 5:1-16)
- The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14)
- Jesus comes to His disciples walking on the water (John 6:15-21)
- Jesus gives sight to a man born blind (John 9:1-41)
John 8:12 (NKJV) "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44)

I. The Pain (V28-37)

John 11:33 (AMP) "When Jesus saw her sobbing, and the Jews who came with her [also] sobbing, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. [He chafed in spirit and sighed and was disturbed.]"

Hebrews 5:7 (ESV) "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears..."

"Love made Him weep. Nothing else ever compelled Him to tears. I do not find that all the pains he endured, even when scourged or fastened to the cruel tree, fetched a single tear from Him. But for love's sake, 'Jesus wept'. The Jews recognized, even with their unfriendly eyes, that His tears were drawn from Him by love alone (John 11:36). From this rock of our salvation no rod but that of love could bring forth water floods."

- Charles Spurgeon

II. The Problem (V38-39)

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV) "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

III. The Promise (V40)

John 11:4 (NKJV) "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

"For [Jesus] the 'glory of God' was the one important thing. This means that the real meaning of what He would do would be accessible only to faith. All who were there, believers or not, would see the miracle. But Jesus is promising Martha the sight of the glory. The crowd would see the miracle, but only believers would perceive its real significance, the glory."

- Leon Morris

IV. The Prayer (V41-42)

1 John 5:14-15 (AMP) “¹⁴ And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us. ¹⁵ And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him.”

John 5:30b (NKJV) “...I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

V. The Power (V43-44)

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV) “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with **a cry of command**, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

VI. The Picture (V38-44)

A. A Picture of Salvation

Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV) “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins”.

Ephesians 2:5 (NKJV) “even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”.

Colossians 2:13 (NKJV) “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”.

*You alone can rescue, You alone can save,
You alone can lift us from the grave,
You came down to find us, led us out of death;
To You alone belongs the highest praise.*

- Matt Redman

B. A Picture of the Flesh (V44)

Galatians 5:16 (HCSB) “I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

C. A Picture of Human Means (V39a, 44b)

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I am convinced that there is an innate knowledge in every person that physical death is not the end. The Bible says in *Ecclesiastes 3:11b (ESV)* “...he has put eternity into man's heart...” In most every culture, every tribe, every people group, there is some kind of belief in life after death, a belief that death is not the end. At the same time there is a fear of death. *Hebrews 2:15 (NKJV)* “and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Short of the Lord’s return, we will not escape physical death. Death comes for all of us – rich, poor, famous, unknown, the old, and sometimes the young. There is nothing we can do about the fact that one day, if the Lord does not return first, we will die. Jesus did not come to take away physical death. He came to give us victory over it. Nowhere was Jesus’ power over death more evident than in His raising of Lazarus from the dead. If you are, as Hebrews 2:15 says, “in bondage through your fear of death”, I have news for you. Jesus gives us victory over death! I want us to have such confidence as we face death that we can even taunt death. That’s what the Apostle Paul did in **1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV)** “⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Death is and always will be an enemy, but for those in Christ, it is a defeated enemy. The picture in 1 Corinthians 15 is of a scorpion without a stinger. The stinger in death is our sin, but those in Christ have had their sins washed away and therefore death is like a scorpion without a stinger.

Nowhere in the Gospel of John up to this point is Jesus’ victory over death more clearly illustrated than when He raises Lazarus from the dead. This is the last of seven sign miracles recorded in John that Jesus performed before His arrest and crucifixion. These seven miracles in John were called signs because they were miracles with a message. They demonstrated His deity – the fact that He was God in human flesh. Here is a recounting of those 7 sign miracles:

- The water is turned into wine (John 2:1-11) – This sign showed Jesus to be the true source of joy and abundant life.
- The healing of the son of a nobleman (John 4:46-54) – This miracle showed Jesus has power over sickness.
- The healing of a man who had been an invalid for 38 years (John 5:1-16) – This is a reminder that Jesus comes to us when we are impotent and without hope.
- The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14) – This sign revealed that Jesus is the bread of life who satisfies every hunger of the soul and spirit.
- Jesus comes to His disciples walking on the water (John 6:15-21) – Jesus has power over every circumstance.
- Jesus gives sight to a man born blind (John 9:1-41) – While sin has caused the mind of natural man to be spiritually blind and thus resulting in mankind walking in darkness, Jesus can give spiritual sight just as He gave this man physical sight. This sign illustrated the truth Jesus gave in **John 8:12 (NKJV)** "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44) – Because of the curse of sin coming into the world through Adam, every person is spiritually dead, but Jesus gives spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

In each of these accounts, there was a real miracle, but the miracle was a sign of the power of Christ to supply every real need of mankind. Jesus came to give joy, to give power over sin, spiritual sickness, spiritual impotence, spiritual hunger, circumstances, spiritual blindness, and spiritual death!

Today, we will focus on the miracle that gives the message of Jesus' power over death.

I. The Pain (V28-37)

The scene here was tense with Mary and Martha and all the mourners showing the depth of grief that only the unexpected death of a loved one can bring. I want to focus not on the grief and pain of the two sisters and the mourners, but on the pain we see in the Lord Jesus Himself. Sometimes we have a mental picture of Jesus as being stoic and never showing emotion. That's not Biblical. The word translated "groaned" in verse 33 literally meant to snort like a horse. It indicated anger or outrage. It is translated "deeply moved" in the ESV and "angry" in the HCSB. What was Jesus deeply moved and angry about? I think it was an outworking of His compassion as He observed the effects of sin coming into the world, the intense pain of living in a fallen world. The word "troubled" in verse 33 means to shake with emotion. I like the Amplified version of **John 11:33 (AMP)** "When Jesus saw her sobbing, and the Jews who came with her [also] sobbing, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. [He chafed in spirit and sighed and was disturbed.]"

I am deeply moved by verse 35 (the shortest verse in the Bible). Jesus was touched deeply by human sorrow. Three times in the Bible we are told that Jesus wept and it is implied in other places. In Luke 19:41, He weeps over Jerusalem because of their sin and rejection of God's messengers and their coming rejection of their Messiah and Deliverer. We read of His weeping in **Hebrews 5:7a (ESV)** "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears..." The third time we see Jesus weeping is here in John 11:35. Why was Jesus weeping? Let's examine the context. In the other two accounts of his weeping, it was over the consequences of sin in the world. I think he saw the anguish and grief and meditated on the fact that this was all the result of sin coming into the world. He hurts when we hurt. Even when He allows us to go through painful and agonizing times to accomplish His greater purpose, He is not cold and detached. He wept as He saw the horrible consequences of sin and the grief in the hearts of those He loved. I am greatly comforted by Charles Spurgeon's commentary on John 11:35: "Love made Him weep. Nothing else ever compelled Him to tears. I do not find that all the pains he endured, even when scourged or fastened to the cruel tree, fetched a single tear from Him. But for love's sake, 'Jesus wept'. The Jews recognized, even with their unfriendly eyes, that His tears were drawn from Him by love alone (John 11:36). From this rock of our salvation no rod but that of love could bring forth water floods" [Charles Spurgeon, "2200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles Spurgeon, Page 299].

II. The Problem (V38-39)

The common tomb of that time was a cave. There would be a large stone, like a mill stone, rolled across the entrance of the cave to keep animals and grave robbers out. Jesus shocked everyone when He commanded that the stone be rolled away. There was a problem in the eyes of Martha that the body was starting to decompose and would be already giving off a foul odor since the Jews did not embalm the body. Perhaps Martha thought Jesus wanted just one more look at His friend and the thought of seeing and smelling her brother's decomposing body was more than she could endure. In her mind, four days was too long a time passed for even Jesus to do anything. I believe that one of the reasons that Jesus delayed in coming to where Lazarus lived was to show that not only could He raise a young girl (Jairus' daughter) who had been dead only a few hours, and not only could He raise the widow of Nain's son who had been dead a day, He could raise up a person who had been dead 4 days and was beginning to decompose. I have news for you, he can raise up a body that had been dead hundreds of years because He has the blueprints. On that great resurrection day all those who have died in Christ will be raised. **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV)** "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." Some of those will have been dead two thousand years. Some will have been killed when a 500 pound bomb dropped on them and obliterated them, but the God who spoke the universe into being will have no problem resurrecting the dead.

III. The Promise (V40)

Jesus had tied Lazarus' resurrection to the glory of God in **John 11:4 (NKJV)** "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Jesus is telling Martha to stop focusing on a dead decaying body and start focusing on Him. The omnipotence of God was about to be put on display. Every time we believe God, we in some way will see the glory of God. Notice the sequence in what Jesus promised Martha. First Martha believes and then she sees. In human affairs we say "Seeing is believing". But when we are dealing with God, believing is seeing. Jesus was not saying that this miracle would depend on Martha's faith. This was a sovereign act of Christ to put the Father's glory on display through the Son's raising a man from the dead. Only by responding in faith would Martha see the glory of God. Listen to this very helpful comment from New Testament scholar Leon Morris: "For [Jesus] the 'glory of God' was the one important thing. This means that the real meaning of what He would do would be accessible only to faith. All who were there, believers or not, would see the miracle. But Jesus is promising Martha the sight of the glory. The crowd would see the miracle, but only believers would perceive its real significance, the glory" [Quoted in John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, John 1-11*, Page 473].

IV. The Prayer (V41-42)

Notice the confidence with which Jesus prayed. Because all He wanted was the Father's will, He prayed with confidence that the Father would answer. The prayer was not so much for Jesus' benefit but for the benefit of those who stood at the tomb. The prayer was more a thanksgiving for the answer than a request. The Key to confident prayer is to know that we are praying in the will of God. **1 John 5:14-15 (AMP)** "¹⁴ And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to *and* hears us. ¹⁵ And if (since) we [positively] know that He listens to us in whatever we ask, we also know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted us as our present possessions] the requests made of Him." Everything that Jesus did was the will of the Father. He said in **John 5:30b (NKJV)** "...I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." The key to powerful prayer to the Father is to come to the place that as Muller said, "I have no will of my own" and we can thus say with Jesus, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father."

V. The Power (V43-44)

The arrangement of the words in the Greek are literally translated like this, "Lazarus! Here! Outside!" At the command of the Son of God, Lazarus comes out still bound in his grave wrappings. In the fourth century, Augustine said that it was good that He called Lazarus' name because Jesus was so powerful that had He not qualified the name of Lazarus, all the graves would have emptied. We smile when we hear that but I believe that it is true! When Christ returns for His church, that is what He will do to all who are His. We looked earlier at 1 Thessalonians 4:16, but I want to look at the ESV. **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)** "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with **a cry of command**, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." What will that command be? I believe that it will be, "Church, come forth!" The difference in the raising Lazarus from the dead and the future raising of His church will not only be a difference in magnitude (one versus millions), but there will be a difference in the resurrection body. Lazarus was restored to a healthy human earthly body that would eventually die again. The resurrection at Christ's return will be to a perfect, permanent resurrection body that will never die.

VI. The Picture (V38-44)

While every detail of the resurrection of Lazarus literally happened, there are also many demonstrations and illustrations of biblical truth put on display that give a picture of some of the most important truths of Scripture.

A. A Picture of Salvation

Just as Lazarus was physically dead, every descendent of Adam is born spiritually dead to God. **Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)** “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins”. **Ephesians 2:5 (NKJV)** “even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”. **Colossians 2:13 (NKJV)** “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”. There was nothing that Mary, Martha, or Lazarus could do about Lazarus’ condition. Mary and Martha could have held his dead body and pleaded with him to come back to life, but it would have been futile because he was dead. There was nothing that anyone could do about Lazarus’ condition ... except God. No one can do anything about spiritual death but our sovereign God. One of the songs we sing says,

*You alone can rescue, You alone can save,
You alone can lift us from the grave,
You came down to find us, led us out of death;
To You alone belongs the highest praise.*

- Matt Redman

Once Lazarus was made alive, he was responsible to obey the call of the Lord to come forth. Even so once our God makes us alive and gives us eyes to see and ears to hear and the Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and the Father draws us to Christ, we are responsible to receive Him. Don’t miss that balance between the sovereign work of God and the responsibility of man. However all praise and glory goes to the one who sovereignly gave us life when we were dead and granted us repentance and gave us the gift of faith to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you picture Lazarus saying, “Jesus and I did a wonderful work in bringing me out of that grave after four days of death”? I think not!! All praise goes to Him.

B. A Picture of the Flesh (V44)

When Lazarus came forth, he was fully alive, but the grave clothes bound him and restricted him. In the New Testament, the flesh includes our programming from our old man that was crucified with Christ, the programming of our life before Christ. The flesh is our old habit patterns and our tendency from our spiritually dead past to do things on our own. In short, it is the self life. Some folks have been to the cross for life (eternal life), but they have never been to the cross for the liberty that is theirs from sin. The Christ who saves us also sets us free from the flesh – the programming of our past. It is only as we reckon on what happened at the cross and allow the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us to fill us that we can experience **Galatians 5:16 (HCSB)** “I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

C. A Picture of Human Means (V39a, 44b)

God in His sovereignty has chosen to use human means in carrying out His sovereign work. Jesus could have commanded the stone covering Lazarus’ grave to roll back; He could have commanded it to fly all the way to the sea, but He used human means in the miracle – “Take away the stone”. Jesus could have caused the grave clothes to fall off of Lazarus, but He commanded those at the scene to take the grave clothes off. It is God who saves and delivers, but He has commanded us to pray for the lost and share the gospel with every creature. He could make new believers immediately mature in the faith, but He commanded us to disciple them to become mature followers of Christ. Only God can speak the word which makes dead sinners alive, but He has given to us the amazing privilege of taking that powerful word called the Gospel to them! The sovereignty of God is never an excuse for our laziness and disobedience in praying for the lost, sharing the Gospel with the lost and discipling those who have been given eternal life.

CONCLUSION

Let’s make application of this account of Lazarus’ resurrection to your life. Maybe you identify with Lazarus in his spiritual death and this morning you are having your eyes opened that in spite of your being as good a person as most and believing facts about God, there is no spiritual life in you. You don’t treasure the Lord Jesus and live in an ever deepening love relationship with Him. Come forth from your dead life and come to Jesus, believing on Him alone to save you. Maybe you relate to Lazarus when he

was still bound by the grave clothes and you know you have been made alive in Christ but the junk, the stinkin' thinkin', the habit patterns from your flesh keep hindering your walk and your maturity in Christ. Come in total surrender to Christ, reckoning on your death with Christ and your life in Him and allow the Holy Spirit fill you and enable you to walk each step in total dependence on Him. Don't live bound up in the stinking grave clothes. You are free. (3202)