

## John 35 – Tough Love: Dying to Live

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John 11:1-20

### Who Was Lazarus?

- Lazarus – Greek version of Eleazar (Helped of God)
  - Not unusual for Jews to have both a Jewish name and a Gentile name, Greek or Roman (Saul (He) – Paul (Lat))
  - Appears to support his two sisters
    - Mary – Beloved (Possibly of Egyptian origin)
    - Martha – Mistress or Head woman in the household
  - Man of some means (Buried in a tomb)

### John Identifies Which Mary

- John identifies Mary as the one who anointed Jesus' feet with oil and wiped them with her hair (Jn 12:3-7)
  - This event is still in the future in relation to this event though it is past tense for John
  - John identifies Mary as the same woman in both events to show this woman living according to her name
  - Very common name – Jesus' mother was Mary (Lk 1:26-27)

## One of Two Lazarus' in Bible

- Only two men named Lazarus appear in the Bible
  - Luke's Lazarus was very poor (Old Covenant) (Lk 16:19-31)
  - John's Lazarus was relatively wealthy (New Covenant)
  - Both men died
  - Both men were *helped of God*; i.e., saved
  - Ergo, both men were loved of God
- Contrasts the Old versus the New Covenants (Ga 4:21-31)

## Only Three Raised from Dead

- Jesus only raised three people from the dead according to the Gospels
  - Little girl (12 y/o) - Daughter of Synagogue Ruler
  - Young man (Poss. 20s) - Son of widow
- Lazarus' raising will be different
  - Above deaths were very recent
  - Lazarus will be in the grave four days - Decaying flesh

## Christ Not Far From Lazarus

- Jesus location when He is told of Lazarus' illness
- Lazarus lives in Bethany
- Bethany on east slope of Mount of Olives
- Jerusalem on west slope of Mount of Olives



## Receiving the News

- Messenger comes from Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, informing Jesus, "...he whom You love is ill."
- Jesus was asked to prevent the death of the little girl
- Jesus was not asked to raise the widow's son
- Here, Jesus was expected to heal Lazarus, prevent his death, based on His *feelings* for Lazarus
- This subtle manipulation possibly hid their own personal motive for keeping Lazarus alive

## Jesus Unmoved by Favoritism

- Mary and Martha were probably focused on their need: keeping Lazarus, their sole support, alive
  - Their phrase, "...he whom YOU loved...", was not even a plea for Lazarus or an expression of *their* concern
  - Their expectation was for Jesus to *hop on down* and do His thing
  - Flesh (sin) ruins every good intention; Jesus will test their faith to expand their understanding of the Gospel

## Man's vs. God's Goals

- The sisters' request, grounded in physical, narrow concerns, did not consider Lazarus' desires
  - The women cannot see beyond this physical life
  - Healing Lazarus would only satisfy the sisters' needs
  - While alive Lazarus probably wished to live; however, Lazarus would be in Abraham's bosom like the other Lazarus after death; why would he want to return? (Lk 16:22)

## Jesus' Love Incomprehensible

- This is the second time John has presented Christ, and therefore God, in a questionable moral or ethical light by man's standards to glorify the Father and Son (Jn 3:1-8)
- Man born blind designed for God's glory; ergo, God designed him blind until Jesus healed him {40 years??} (Jn 9:1-5)
- Jesus delayed going to Lazarus, allowing him to die, to illustrate God's power and glory over death

## Jesus You Do Not Know

- Throughout John Jesus has been abrupt, moving according to the Father's, not man's, plan
  - Lost man sees this as *proof* that God is uncaring
  - God gives man unimpeachable evidence of His life
- Lost man, and many Christians, want a *fluffy* Jesus who seeks social good limited to this life,; however, this ignores Christ's good: changed nature with eternal life

## Lazarus Dies for God's Glory

- Christ plainly states that this illness occurred to bring glory to God and to the Son
  - Illness does not lead to death - Separation from God
  - If God raises a man from the grave after four days then He can raise His Son from the grave after three days (Jn 2:19)
  - Lazarus foreshadows Ezekiel's *valley of dry bones*, rebirth (Ez 37:1-14)
  - This will also change the faith of: sisters, apostles, etc.

## Jesus Waits for Two Days

- Jesus did not have to go to Lazarus; He could have just spoken and Lazarus would have been healed (Jh: 6:5-13)
- Imagine the challenge of faith for Lazarus and his sisters when he dies; what will become of them?
- Waiting on the Lord, learning His ways which are far different from our own plans and thoughts (Is: 40:27-31)

## Apostles' Faiths Also Tested

- Christ readies to go to Lazarus; return to Judea
  - Apostles state He was nearly stoned there; why return?
  - This event occurred after Hanukkah but before Pesach
  - Lazarus' death was OK to protect themselves, and Him
  - Jesus upbraids them: they must work in the light to not stumble; those who work at night will stumble and fail
  - They were raised in darkness, how hard to live in light

## Lazarus Sleeps

- Christ states Lazarus sleeps, He goes to awaken Him
  - Apostles take this to mean that Lazarus will recover; i.e., they do not need to go to Judea
  - Christ tells them plainly: Lazarus has died
- *Falling asleep* or *sleeping* is euphemism for death of saved
  - Christians depicted as falling sleep, even with violent deaths (Jh: 5:38-43, Ac: 7:60)

## Lazarus' Miracle for Apostles

- Christ clearly states that the raising of Lazarus would strengthen the Apostles' faith
  - If Jesus could raise Lazarus then God could raise Him from the dead so they should not lose faith at His death
  - However, from other gospels we know that they did lose faith and did not expect Him to rise from the dead
  - Shows that if God gave us miraculous healing powers, man still would not believe in Christ and be saved - Sin

## Let Us Go Die With Him

- Thomas urges his fellow Apostles to follow Jesus and die with Him
  - Air of resignation rather than demonstration of faith
  - Loyalty not yet tested, for the night of His arrest they will all flee to protect themselves (Mk 14:46-50)
- The twenty mile walk to Bethany must have been very somber: death and expecting death {Except Christ}

## Jesus Comes to Bethany

- As Jesus arrives in Bethany He is told Lazarus has been dead four days; something He already knew
  - Bethany being only two miles or so from Jerusalem meant that Lazarus' many friends were attending the funeral and subsequent activities
  - These would all be witnesses of this very public healing
  - Their news would disturb the Sadducees and Pharisees

## Martha Comes to Meet Jesus

- Martha (The Mistress) comes to meet Jesus, she is the *take charge, do it* woman of the manor; yet, coming to Jesus displays self-humility and great respect to Christ
  - Mary (Beloved) remains in the house seated which is a sign of authority, or pride (Cathedra - Latin for chair)
  - Conveys idea of aloofness, blaming Jesus for Lazarus' death; i.e., *He can explain to me why Lazarus died leaving my future uncertain!*

## No One Understands Jesus

- This event occurred near the end of Jesus' ministry
  - He has taught His Apostles for three years
  - Lazarus and family are staunch in faith concerning Him
  - Yet, no one really understood His calling
  - Their expectations were still grounded in Jewish eschatology: rulership in this creation
  - After nearly 600 years of mulling over the *New Covenant*, no one understand what it was or what it meant (Jr 31:31-34)

## Subtleties Explain Christ' Delay

- Subtleties give context explaining why Christ delayed
  - Mary and Martha, though, believers, were focused on physical needs rather than spiritual needs
  - Apostles' faiths were weak; unsure of Christ's talk of His coming death, burial and resurrection
  - Public reversal of death would confront the Sadducees and Pharisees with another undeniable sign revealing them as *false shepherds*, rejecting Christ and His truths