

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS



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CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES

The Raising of Lazarus

Read John 11:1-57 in your Bible.

Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, lived in Bethany, a little village nestled on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. Martha was a practical, “take charge” kind of person. Mary, the sensitive one, had keen insight into spiritual matters. This loving family was close knit, and there was always room for one more in their home.

On many occasions, while traveling in and around Jerusalem, Jesus would stop at their house. Here, he could rest and get away from the press of the crowds. Since Jesus had no real home of his own, how he must have enjoyed the warmth of this family in Bethany. As Jesus shared meals and conversation with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, they came to know and love him and knew that he also loved them.

An Urgent Message

One day as Jesus ministered east of the Jordan River in an area called Perea, a breathless messenger came and told him that Lazarus was very, very sick. The anxious sisters had sent this message to Jesus because they knew he had power to heal. They thought he surely would come to Bethany at once and heal their brother. But Jesus did not return with the messenger. Instead he remained in Perea.

Back In Bethany

Can’t you just imagine how disappointed and concerned Martha and Mary were when the messenger returned to Bethany without Jesus? Jesus was their friend. They were expecting him; surely he was on his way.

They continued to wait, as Lazarus grew weaker and weaker. Where was Jesus? He had healed others, why not Lazarus? Martha and Mary must have felt helpless and hopeless. It was soon plain to see that Jesus would not get there in time to save Lazarus. Their brother continued to worsen. Then what the sisters feared, happened. Lazarus died.

Now Lazarus was dead. DEAD! Martha and Mary just couldn’t understand. Why? Why did their brother have to die? Many friends and neighbors came to comfort them, but it was Jesus they needed most of all, and he had not come.

Friends prepared Lazarus’ body for burial. A crowd of mourners walked with the grieving sisters to the gravesite. The body was placed in a tomb, which was actually a cave. A large stone was placed against the opening of the tomb. It was over. All hope was gone.

Then Jesus Came

After the burial, friends and neighbors returned with Martha and Mary to their home. How empty the house seemed without Lazarus! Then Martha heard the news: Jesus was coming! Jesus was coming! But Lazarus had been in the grave four days. Jesus was four days late. Or . . . was he?

The grieving Martha left Mary at the house and ran to meet Jesus. Speaking words of comfort, Jesus said to Martha, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”* (John 11:25).

When Mary knew Jesus had arrived, she ran and fell at his feet. When Jesus saw her sobbing in anguish, along with the friends and neighbors weeping with her, he was deeply moved in his spirit. They led Jesus to Lazarus’ grave. Jesus quietly wept as he stood there.

Out of the Tomb

Jesus instructed that the stone be moved from the entrance of the tomb. Martha protested, knowing that after four days the odor would be almost unbearable. After the stone was removed, Jesus prayed to his Father, thanking him for what was about to happen. Then Jesus called, in a loud voice, *“LAZARUS, COME OUT!”* (John 11:43).

The people watched in amazement. No one moved. Then a noise came from within the tomb, the sound of shuffling feet. Lazarus stepped to the mouth of the cave. He walked slowly, still bound by the grave clothes. There he stood for all to see! What a glorious moment! Jesus commanded that the grave clothes be removed from Lazarus.

Lazarus was alive! Rejoicing and thanksgiving to God filled the home of the two sisters and brother that night. Word quickly spread about the mighty miracle of Jesus.

Conclusion

Although everyone thought Jesus had come too late; he is never too late. He is never too early. He is always right on time—God’s time. Jesus has power over sin and death. He loves you with an everlasting love, and he has the power to forgive your sins and give you eternal life.

Pray this prayer: *“Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”*

Welcome Into God’s family! Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.