

John 11:8-48

Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus, was sick,
very sick.

*Just hang on Lazarus. Jesus will soon be
here.*

But when the messenger returned, Jesus
wasn't with him.

They were shocked, and disillusioned.

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However, Jesus' lack of response made good
sense to His disciples.

He had already told them, **"This sickness is
not unto death."**

On the other hand, their death was a real
possibility if they showed their faces
anywhere near Jerusalem.

Yes, Jesus had definitely made the right decision.

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And then it was their turn to be shocked.

Two days later, Jesus suddenly said, "**Let us go into Judaea again.**"

John 11:8 "**His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?**"

Now everyone was confused.

Mary and Martha couldn't understand why Jesus hadn't come, and His disciples couldn't understand why He was going.

Actually, the only One who understood Jesus was His Heavenly Father, and He was "**well pleased.**"

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Certainly, Jesus sympathized with His disciples' dilemma, and He did His best to calm their fears.

V 9-10 "--- **Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.**

10: But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

As I'm sure you realize, Jesus and His disciples lived in a much different world than we do.

For one thing, because of the invention of electricity, we can light up the night and just keep going.

I'm not sure whether that is a good thing or not.

But the point is, back then, it didn't make a lot of sense to travel at night.

Oh, they had oil lamps and candles, but they would be very awkward, and there was a real possibility of tripping over things, or getting hit over the head.

So, as usual, Jesus had taken a piece of everyday wisdom and used it to emphasize His point.

Yes, they would be entering dangerous territory, but if they were careful, everything would be all right.

V 11 **"These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."**

Even though Jesus was miles away from Bethany, it's quite evident that He knew exactly what was going on there.

V 12-14 **"Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.**

13: Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

14: Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."

Yes, that was the bottom line, and it must have been quite a shock.

No doubt Jesus had used the term "**sleep**" to soften the blow.

However, it's not all that uncommon to refer to death as sleep.

For instance, in 1 Kings 2:10 we read ---

"So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David."

However, there was something quite unusual in what He said.

In view of the fact that Jesus was talking about death, His previous remark --- **"I go, that I may awake him out of sleep"** should have raised a few eyebrows.

I wonder if His disciples had put two and two together?

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Yes, Lazarus was dead.

V 15-16 **"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.**

16: Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Jesus had just made another unusual remark, hadn't He?

Did you notice? --- **"I am glad for your
sakes that I was not there, to the
intent ye may believe."**

If anyone believed in Jesus, I would have
thought it was His disciples.

Hadn't they left all to follow him?

And didn't I just hear Thomas say that he
was willing to **"die with him?"**

Obviously, Jesus was referring to another
level of belief, which, as yet, they
hadn't attained.

V 17-19 **"Then when Jesus came, he found that
he had lain in the grave four days
already.**

18: Now Bethany was nigh unto

Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

**19: And many of the Jews came to Martha
and Mary, to comfort them concerning
their brother."**

No doubt many of these Jews would be friends of the family, and probably friends of Jesus.

However, some of them must have made Martha a little nervous.

For V 20 says **"Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house."**

Yes, it almost appears that she was worried about a confrontation.

V 21 **"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."**

There was certainly one thing you could say about Martha. You never had to guess what she was thinking.

For instance, there was that unfortunate incident when she reprimanded her sister for not helping in the kitchen. And not only was she angry with Mary, but her guest got a good deal of the blame --- **"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?"**

And she didn't beat around the bush this time either --- **"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."**

Yes, she was upset and disappointed, which wasn't really too surprising, but she hadn't lost her faith in Jesus.

V 22-24 **"But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.**
23: Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.
24: Martha saith unto him, I know that

**he shall rise again in the resurrection
at the last day."**

Certainly Martha believed in the
resurrection with all her heart, but
she wanted to talk to her brother now.
And then Jesus said something that went way
beyond a physical resurrection.

V 25-26 "--- **I am the resurrection, and the
life: he that believeth in me, though
he were dead, yet shall he live:
26: And whosoever liveth and believeth
in me shall never die. Believest thou
this?"**

There's no doubt in my mind that Jesus had
taken this opportunity to talk about
eternal life --- **"whosoever liveth and
believeth in me shall never die."**

Yes, the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, we have passed **"from death unto life."**

Eternal life isn't something we hope for at the end of our time down here. It begins when we accept Jesus, and it never ends --- **"whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."**

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V 27 **"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."**

This wasn't exactly the question Jesus had asked her, but her answer revealed a mature faith.

Martha believed that Jesus was her Messiah, and she also believed, and this is very

important, that He was the **"Son of God."**

That's what the blind man believed when he fell down and worshipped Jesus.

And that's what Peter believed when so many others were forsaking Jesus --- **"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."**

That kind of belief on the part of the nation would have ushered them into the kingdom!

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V 28-31 **"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.**

29: As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

30: Now Jesus was not yet come into the

town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

31: The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there."

V 28 says, Martha **"called Mary her sister secretly."**

Yes, it certainly appeared that she was nervous about some of the guests.

But Mary, with typical enthusiasm, made a beeline for the door, trailing the Jews behind her.

Martha must have been shaking her head.

V 32 **"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."

If you go back to V 21, you will find that Martha had said exactly the same thing. However, I'm quite sure Mary's tone was decidedly different.

It wasn't what she said, it was where she said it.

Knowing Martha, I wouldn't be surprised if she was looking Jesus straight in the eye when she said, "**Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.**"

Mary's words were sobbed out at His feet. Neither of the sisters could make sense of what Jesus was doing, but their response was quite different.

It was different because they were quite different, and I'm sure Jesus understood.

V 33-35 **"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34: And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35: Jesus wept."**

Here we see an amazing blend of God and Man, in the Lord Jesus.

Because He is God, He can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

In fact, He had already told His disciples, **"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."**

No, this sickness was not unto death, but it was unto grieving.

Yes, Jesus grieved for His friend Lazarus,
and He grieved for his sisters, and He
wept.

He knew exactly what they were going
through, and He was going through it
with them.

And because He is God, He was fully aware of
the pain and suffering they had already
experienced before He arrived.

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At first, they had been so confident that
Jesus would come to their rescue.

What a blessing it was to have a loving
friend Who could heal the sick.

But the hours had dragged on, as they
watched their dear brother grow weaker
and weaker, and finally succumb to
death.

Even then, as they sat by his body, there was hope.

Maybe He would come with the mourners, as He had with Jairus's daughter. But He didn't.

Finally, the dreaded hour had come when they must follow the procession carrying their beloved brother to his grave.

But there was still hope.

Hadn't the widow of Nain been following a similar procession when Jesus stopped the bier and said, **"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise?"**

Maybe Jesus would meet their procession, or be at the tomb when they arrived!

But nobody was there; and that massive stone which shut out their final view of their brother, also shut out their last ray of hope.

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It was four days after their brother's death
when Jesus finally arrived.

And now Mary found herself standing beside
her Lord as He wept.

She never thought it would end like this.

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Yes, "**Jesus wept.**"

Isaiah called Him "**a man of sorrows, and
acquainted with grief**" --- grief for
His nation, and grief for His friends.

But I have a question to ask.

Now that Jesus is seated at the right hand
of the Father, do you think He has lost
His capacity to weep?

I don't think so.

I think He is every bit as concerned for our
grief as He was for theirs.

And that's why Hebrews 4:15-16 says, "--- we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

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♪♪"Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth and song:
As the burdens press, and the cares
distress,
And the way grows weary and long?

O yes, He cares, I know He cares!
His heart is touched by my grief;

*When the days are weary,
The long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares."*

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V 36-37 **"Then said the Jews, Behold how he
loved him!**

**37: And some of them said, Could not
this man, which opened the eyes of the
blind, have caused that even this man
should not have died?"**

Their comments were all in the past tense,
weren't they?

And their sentiment was much the same as
Mary and Martha's.

Jesus could have done something if He had
only arrived on time, but now it was
too late!

Death had won the victory, and Jesus must
weep with the rest of them.

V 38-39 "Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.
39: Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

Of course, practical Martha had her objections. *Don't you understand, Lord?*

Oh, Jesus understood all right.

Actually, that was the point.

Lazarus had been dead for four days!

By this time, no one could argue with the fact that his body had begun to decompose.

And that was important.

In fact, that's why Jesus had waited those two extra days.

If He had started off immediately, Lazarus would have only been dead for two days when He arrived.

In that case, his resurrection would have been very much like the others.

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So, in spite of Martha's objections, Jesus said, **"Take ye away the stone."**

Of course, He knew this command was putting a lot of stress on His friend.

So, as she stood there trembling --- **"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"**

Just hang in there Martha. The suffering and the sorrow you have experienced has

*all been permitted, so you can --- "see
the glory of God."*

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Already, many of Jesus' miracles had made it evident, at least to those with an unbiased mind, that Jesus was "**a teacher come from God.**"

But a teacher can't save your immortal soul. No, the Lamb of God had to be much more than a teacher. He had to be God Himself. For --- "**if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.**"

Lazarus' resurrection would prove once and for all that Jesus was God.

Certainly, Jesus had raised others from the dead.

But none of those others had ever made it to the tomb, and certainly, none of them had lain in that grave for four days.

No, only the Creator Himself could have brought Lazarus back from the dead. And Jesus was about to exhibit those very powers.

The powers He had talked about in John 5:26-27 "--- **The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.**

26: For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

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But we have to ask the question, *Why would the Creator of all things, ask the mourners to roll away the stone? He could have simply spoken the word, and blown it into the next county.*

No, He didn't need any help to remove that stone, but He did need their involvement if He was going to remove the stone of unbelief.

First of all, Martha needed to roll away the stone that said, *It's too late, Lord.*

In fact, they all had to make that decision. Would they object or participate?

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And considering what was about to happen, they needed to be thoroughly convinced that Lazarus was really dead.

And once they rolled the stone away, the proof would be overwhelming!

Yes, seeing is believing, and if I'm not being too crude, smelling is also believing.

The moment they rolled that stone away, any theory that Lazarus might have been playing possum would be blown to bits. Yes, he was dead all right.

V 41 **"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."**

Why did Jesus pray out loud in the presence of the mourners?

Well, there was a reason, and we're not left to wonder what it was.

V 42 **"And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."**

At one time, the Pharisees had insinuated that Jesus was in league with the devil.

Remember their words --- **"This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."**

Everyone needed to know that the power they were about to witness came from God.

V 43 **"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."**

Yes, Jesus **"cried with a loud voice,"** and way off in Paradise (or Abraham's bosom) Lazarus heard Him.

And He called him by name --- **"Lazarus, come forth."**

He had the power to raise all believers, and some day He will do just that --- **"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:

17: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But for now, it would only be Lazarus.

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V 44-45 "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45: Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."

Jesus had the power to break the bonds of death, but He still called upon the mourners to loosen the grave clothes. Once again, Jesus wanted them to participate in the miracle, and V 45 tells us that those who **"had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."**

And you know what? That might have been their last opportunity to do so.

God's four witnesses had left them unmoved, or at least undecided, but this was different.

Yes, God's way had been the best way.

And not only had it been the best way for the Jews who had been converted, but it was also the best way for the believers.

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Jesus had told His disciples, "-- **I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.**"

And Jesus was also glad He had gone to Bethany to the intent that Mary and Martha might believe.

Oh, they were all believers, but up until then, there had always been a capstone on their belief.

Now, it had been blown away!

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V 46-48 **"But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."**

Yes, Martha was right. Not all of the mourners were Jesus' friends.

V 47-48 **"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many**

miracles.

48: 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."

Apparently this resurrection had made a profound impression on them.

But in their case, it was panic, not joy, that had welled up in their hearts ---

"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."

They were beginning to believe their own lie, or rather Satan's lie.

Yes, Jesus was a political hazard!

Actually, He was a political asset.

If their nation had only accepted Him as their Messiah, they would have been swept into the kingdom.

However, they continued to believe the lie, and they were prepared to act upon it.

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I would like to conclude this lesson with a little "What if?" thinking.

Remember what Jesus said to Martha, when she was struggling with the thought of taking away the stone --- **"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"**

What did Jesus really mean when He said, **"if thou wouldst believe."**

Certainly, there were a lot of believers standing around the tomb.

Martha had already confessed, "**I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.**"

And some time ago, Peter had said, "**we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.**"

And I'm sure the rest of the disciples had nodded their heads in agreement.

And surely some of the mourners standing there also believed that Jesus was "**the Son of God.**"

So what if those believers had refused to roll away the stone?

Oh, I know Jesus could have done it Himself, but I'm not completely convinced He would have.

So what if they had refused?

Wouldn't Lazarus have remained in the tomb,
imprisoned by the stone of unbelief,
while the Lord of Glory stood outside?
Maybe that's the *belief* Jesus was talking
about, when He said --- **"if thou
wouldest believe, thou shouldest see
the glory of God."**

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We also believe that Jesus is God in the
flesh, don't we?
But the question we have to answer is the
one they had to answer.

How big is your God?

Is there some dream, something Jesus has
asked you to do for Him, laying dormant
behind your stone of unbelief while the
Lord of Glory stands outside?

Well, His commandment hasn't changed, and it
isn't too late to obey Him --- **"Take ye**

away the stone" --- "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"