**Jesus Raises Three Persons from Death (Week 3)**

**You may remember that when we first looked at the miracles of Christ in this series, we noted that all the miracles clearly display firstly, the compassion of Christ, and secondly the sovereignty of God. In the 3 miracles mentioned in the gospels where Jesus raises to life individuals who have died, both these characteristics are openly displayed.**

Recapping the Oxford shorter dictionary definition of miracles, affirms the unambiguous effect all miracles had on humanity.

*A marvellous event exceeding the known powers of nature, and therefore supposed to be due to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural agency; an act exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured by God. (Oxford Shorter)*

For us the three miracles have continued to underpin our faith in Jesus overcoming death: by overcoming the first death he convinces us of his ability to overcome the second death and bring us into eternal heaven.

The three miracles are:

Raising the son of the widow in Nain, (found only in Luke)

Raising the rulers daughter, (found in Matthew, Mark and Luke)

And Raising of Lazarus (found only in John)

We will look primarily at the raising of Lazarus as the most insightful of the three. However, notice in the other two the sincere compassion of Jesus, and the reaction of the people to the display of God’s sovereignty.

**Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17)**

11Now it happened, the day after, *that* He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. 12And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. 13When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” 14Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” 15So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

16Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us”; and, “God has visited His people.” 17And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

**Jesus raised the ruler's daughter from the dead (Matthew 9: 18-26)**

While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” 19 Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. 20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” 22 Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment. 23 When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, 24 he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. 25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. 26 News of this spread through all that region.

### The Death of Lazarus (John 11: 1- 44)

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2(This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” 5Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

8“But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

9Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. 10It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

11After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

12His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” 13Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

16Then Thomas (also known as Didymus[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26540a)]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

17On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was less than two miles[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26542b)] from Jerusalem, 19and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

28After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34“Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

35Jesus wept.

36Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

37But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

38Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39“Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.”

40Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

41So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

43When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

Various commentators bring out a number of key areas for noting when reading through this particular miracle.

**a.** Jesus had a close relationship with this family, and it was expected that if He miraculously met the needs of so many others, He would meet their need also.

**b.** **Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick**: They do not state their request, but they do not need to. Where there is a true bond of love, it is enough to make the need known.

JC Ryle comments thus:

They did not ask Him to come at once, or to work a miracle, and command the disease to depart. They only said, "Lord, he whom You love is sick," and left the matter there, in the full belief that He would do what was best. Here was the true faith and humility of saints! Here was gracious submission of will!

**c.** **This sickness is not unto death**: Lazarus was already dead when Jesus said this; but He knew the end result of this would be **the glory of God**, not death.

**d.** **He stayed two more days**: In John's gospel, there are three times when someone near and dear to Jesus makes a request of Him. In each of these three cases, Jesus responded in the same way. Apart from the indicated request by the sisters, it is worth looking at:-

John 2: 1-5 The wedding at Cana.

John 7: 1-9 His brothers try to persuade him to go to Judea to show the world his works.

* He first refused to grant their request, then He fulfilled it after asserting that He does things according to the timing and will of God, not man.
* Through His actions, Jesus demonstrated that His delays were not denials. They would bring greater glory to God.

**e.** **Jesus courageously decides to go to Judea and Jerusalem**.

Then after this He said to *the* disciples, "Let us go to Judea again. " *The* disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"

Jesus was willing to go to Judea and minister to Lazarus and his family, even though it was dangerous for him to go there. Jesus walked in the confidence of someone who really trusts God.

9Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. 10It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

Is this not a direct reference to God’s Word being the true light? That is why we have to keep delving into the gospels, to prevent us from stumbling. And the best way of getting better understanding is through collective participation.

**f.** Misunderstanding is easily done even for the disciples. We must never think that we have full understanding, but we have greater insight when we listen to others who have godly wisdom.

These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. " Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well. " However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

**g.** **Let us also go, that we may die with Him**:

Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Thomas expresses what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. He is willing to go with Jesus, even if it means dying with Him. Thomas may not have understood it at the time, but we can know today that if we die with Him we will surely be raised and be glorified with Him.

One commentator notes thatChurch tradition says that Thomas was called "The Twin" because he looked like Jesus, putting him at special risk. If any among the disciples of Jesus were potential targets of persecution, it would be the one who *looked* like Jesus. Think what you will of this comment.

**h.** So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

The four days is only significant because it must be accepted that after **four days** there was absolutely no hope of resuscitation.

**i.** **Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died**: **Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You**:

Martha plainly states her disappointment in Jesus' late arrival. Even if she doesn't show total confidence in Jesus at this point, her honesty with Jesus is refreshing. Martha isn't confident that Jesus will raise her brother, rather she says that she still believes in Him *despite* the disappointment.

j. **I am the resurrection and the life**.

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again. " Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. " Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

* **I am the resurrection and the life**: Through Christ we are raised after death to eternal life in heaven.
* **He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live**: Although we naturally fear death, the Christian can only fear dying. After death is glorious life.

**It is worth re**-reading Bunyon’s final chapter in Pilgrim’s Progress to understand our natural fear of dying, of passing through the river.

*The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in their minds, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth. They said, "No"; yet they could not help them in that case; "for", said they, "you shall find it deeper or shallower as you believe in the King of the place."  
  
They then addressed themselves to the water and, entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all his waves go over me!*

k. **Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died**

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

This can be considered to be a sincere statement of faith, saying that if Jesus were here Mary has no doubt that He would have healed Lazarus. On the other hand, it can be seen as a criticism of what she perceived as the tardiness of Jesus. Are we not guilty of criticising God at times when we feel our prayers are taking too long to be answered?

l. **Jesus Groaned and** **Jesus Wept**

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see. " Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb.

The groaning suggests anger as well as sadness.

Calvin comments:

"Christ does not come to the sepulchre as an idle spectator, but like a wrestler preparing for the contest. Therefore no wonder that He groans again, for the violent tyranny of death which He had to overcome stands before His eyes. "

Jesus wept. He won't settle for this domination of death much longer.

**m.** **Jesus at the tomb**

It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone. " Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days. " Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

**Only believers can see the glory of God in the miracle that is about to happen. That is why non-believers look for natural reasons for the results of God’s work. But they are missing the glorious sight of God through his work. They can see God’s work in the natural world, but call it nature. But they cannot see God in the un-natural world.**

**n**. **Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.**

Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this,* that they may believe that You sent Me. " Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Jesus looked up, or lifted up his eyes. Remember the feeding of the 5 thousand when Jesus looked to God before breaking the bread?

Jesus speaks to a dead body as if Lazarus was alive. An instance of *calling those things which do not exist as though they did* (Romans 4: 17)

**o.** **And he who had died came out**: Lazarus came out of the place of death, the tomb, that was the domain of Satan, into the presence of Christ. He simply followed Christ’s call. And he came out still wrapped in his burial clothes. He would eventually need to be buried a second time.

Obviously there is a desire to compare this miracle with the empty tomb after the resurrection of Jesus himself. But in John 20 v5 we see that when Peter went into the tomb he saw the linen cloths lying there. Jesus Christ had destroyed death and had no need of the burial clothes again. Unlike Lazarus.

Verses 45 to 54 show us the reaction that the miracle had on both the normal Jew as well as on the leaders of the Jewish faith. Both groups clearly saw the glory of God in the raising of Lazarus, but their actions were opposite to each other; the humble Jew believed in Jesus, while the Pharisees plotted to kill him. Believing Jesus is the Son of God is not enough; obeying him is what is required.