

§186. Jesus Resurrects Lazarus - Part A(John 11:1-16)

Introduction

1. In the Gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are distinctively referred to as **signs** (**semeia**). These signs were recorded so that readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

(a)

- (b) **Changing Water into Wine** (John 2:1–11): Jesus attends a wedding in Cana of Galilee. When the wine runs out, he turns six large stone water jars into high-quality wine. John notes this as the first of his signs.

- (c) **Healing the Royal Official's Son** (John 4:46–54): While in Cana, a royal official begs Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his dying son. Jesus heals the boy from a distance simply by stating, "Your son will live."

- (d) **Healing the Paralytic at Bethesda** (John 5:1–15): In Jerusalem, Jesus heals a man who had been an invalid for 38 years near the pool of Bethesda, telling him to pick up his mat and walk.

- (e) **Feeding the 5,000** (John 6:5–14): Near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus multiplies five barley loaves and two small fish to feed a massive crowd, with twelve baskets of fragments left over. (Note: This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels).

- (f) **Walking on Water** (John 6:16–21): The disciples are in a boat struggling against a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus walks out to them on the water, tells them not to be afraid, and the boat miraculously arrives at their destination.

- (g) **Healing the Man Born Blind** (John 9:1–7): Jesus makes mud with his saliva, puts it on a blind man's eyes, and tells him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man does so and comes back able to see.

- (h) **Raising Lazarus from the Dead** (John 11:1–45): The climatic sign of John's Gospel. Jesus arrives in Bethany four days after his friend Lazarus has died. He commands the stone to be rolled away from the tomb and calls Lazarus to come out, raising him from the dead.
- (i) **The Miraculous Catch of Fish** (John 21:1–14): After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). The disciples had fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat, resulting in a catch of 153 large fish without tearing the net.

2. The four Gospels record three specific instances where Jesus performed the miracle of raising someone from the dead during his earthly ministry.

- (a) **The Daughter of Jairus** (Matthew 9:18–26, Mark 5:21–43, Luke 8:40–56): Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, begs Jesus to come heal his twelve-year-old daughter who is dying. While they are en route, messengers arrive to say the girl has died. Jesus continues to the house, dismisses the weeping mourners by telling them the child is merely sleeping, and enters her room. He takes her by the hand and says, "Talitha koum" (Aramaic for "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). She immediately stands up and walks around.
- (b) **The Widow's Son at Nain** (Luke 7:11–17): This miracle is unique to the Gospel of Luke. As Jesus and his disciples approach the town gate of Nain, they encounter a funeral procession. The deceased is a young man, the only son of a widowed mother. Moved with compassion for the grieving widow, Jesus steps forward, touches the open coffin (bier), and says, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sits up, begins to speak, and is returned to his mother.
- (c) **Lazarus of Bethany** (John 11:1–44): This event is unique to the Gospel of John and serves as the final and greatest of the "Seven

Signs." Lazarus, a close friend of Jesus and the brother of Mary and Martha, falls severely ill. Jesus delays his arrival, and by the time he reaches Bethany, Lazarus has been dead and entombed for four days. Jesus orders the stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance, prays to the Father, and commands in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus emerges still wrapped in his linen burial cloths.

3. John 11 records the beginning of one of the greatest miracles in Christ's earthly ministry—the raising of Lazarus from the dead.
4. In verses 1–16, the Lord deliberately delays His visit to Bethany, revealing that God's purposes are often higher than human understanding.
5. This passage teaches important truths about faith, suffering, divine timing, and the glory of God.
6. It also demonstrates Christ's sovereign control over life and death and prepares the disciples for deeper faith.
7. This happens in Judea and the Sanhedrin is fully aware of this. This happened about 2-3 months prior to the crucifixion.
8. Mary Magdalene:
 - (a) A devoted follower of Jesus
 - (b) Delivered from "seven demons" (Luke 8:2)
 - (c) Present at the crucifixion John 19:25
 - (d) One of the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection John 20:1–18
 - (e) She is called "Magdalene" because she likely came from Magdala, a town near the Sea of Galilee.
9. Mary of Bethany (Sister of Martha and Lazarus)
 - (a) The sister of Martha and Lazarus from Bethany near Jerusalem (John 11:1-2)

- (b) Known for sitting at Jesus' feet and learning from Him (Luke 10:38-42)
- (c) The woman who anointed Jesus with costly perfume before His death (John 12:1-8)

Exposition

11:1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

1. Lazarus: He is introduced as a real historical person. We can reasonably assume that he is a believer since it is mentioned that Jesus loved them.
2. Bethany: It is a small village near Jerusalem. The word means the house of poor. At this point of time Jesus was beyond Jordan (John 10:40).
3. Mary and Martha: The mention of Mary and Martha shows the close relationship this family had with Jesus. Earlier, he visited their home (Luke 10:38-42).
4. Note: Even faithful believers experience sickness and hardship. This is expected in a sin infested world.

11:2 It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

1. John identifies Mary by the devotion she would later show to Christ. This happened in John 12:2-8.
2. This reminds readers that deeply spiritual people are not exempt from trials. Godly homes still encounter suffering in a fallen world.

11:3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

1. Mary and Martha turned immediately to Jesus in their trouble. Their message reflects confidence in Christ's love and compassion.
2. They did not demand a healing; they did not give any instruction to Jesus; they did not claim the faith of Lazarus as basis for healing; they did not claim Lazarus' love for Jesus; True faith brings burdens honestly before the Lord.
3. Love (**phileo**): This is the brotherly love; the love of a friend, personal affection, human love. Jesus loved this man as a friend. He had personal affection for him. This word also indicates the humanity of Jesus.

11:4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

1. Jesus revealed that God had a greater purpose behind Lazarus's sickness. Though death would occur temporarily, it would not be the final outcome.
2. God often uses trials to display His glory and strengthen faith.

11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

1. Love here is **Agapeo** seeking the ultimate good of its object. This is divine love.
2. This verse is important because it connects Christ's delay with His love.
3. The Lord's seeming silence or delay should never be interpreted as lack of care.
4. Divine love sometimes allows painful circumstances for higher spiritual purposes.

11:6 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

1. Additional two days is for the glory of God and not due to lack of love for them. If that were the case, Jesus would have left immediately.

2. From the disciples' perspective, this makes sense. Going to Judea is suicidal.
3. From a human perspective, this delay seems difficult to understand. Delay ensured that a miracle happened beyond doubt.
4. Yet Jesus acted according to the Father's perfect timing, not human urgency.
5. God is never late, even when His timing tests our faith.

11:7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

1. Jesus willingly returned to an area where hostility against Him was increasing.
2. His obedience to the Father was greater than fear of danger. Christ moved forward courageously according to divine purpose.

11:8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"

1. The disciples responded with fear and concern for safety. Their reaction was understandable, since opposition against Jesus had intensified (John 10:31, 39).
2. Believers often struggle between faith and fear when facing danger.

11:9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world."

1. Jesus used the image of daylight to describe walking in God's appointed will.
2. As long as He followed the Father's timing, no enemy could stop His mission prematurely. Obedience to God brings spiritual clarity and confidence.

3. Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' in John 8:12 and 9:5. Disciple following the Lord will safe as long as they follow his commandments and work.

11:10 But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

1. Those who walk outside God's will stumble in spiritual darkness. Separation from divine guidance leads to confusion and fear.
2. R C Ryle says night is the time of spiritual temptation.
3. The safest path is always obedience to God's revealed direction.
4. Being a coward and taking all kinds of precautionary steps and not being faithful isn't going to lengthen it; and being bold in the face of enemies isn't going to shorten it because it is what God has ordained it to be

11:11 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

1. Jesus referred to death as sleep because for believers death is temporary.
2. This language points to Christ's authority over the grave.
3. To the Lord, raising Lazarus was as easy as awakening someone from sleep.
4. Note **Our** and **I** implies only Christ can do this miracle.

11:12 Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."

1. The disciples misunderstood Jesus and interpreted His words naturally instead of spiritually.
2. Human understanding is often limited when God speaks about eternal realities. Believers must learn to listen carefully to Christ's words.

11:13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

1. John explains the misunderstanding clearly for the reader. Spiritual truth can be missed when people think only from an earthly perspective.
2. Christ patiently teaches His followers despite their slowness to understand.

11:14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

1. Jesus spoke directly and honestly about the situation. The Lord never ignores reality or minimizes suffering.
2. Faith is not denial of hardship but trust in God through hardship.

11:15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”

1. Jesus was not glad about suffering itself but about the greater faith that would result.
2. Delay results in faith. Believing is better than healing.
3. The miracle to come would strengthen the disciples before the coming trials of the cross. God often uses difficult circumstances to deepen faith.

11:16 Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

1. Thomas is often remembered for doubt, but here he showed courage and loyalty.
2. Though he misunderstood the situation, he was willing to stand with Christ even unto death.
3. Courage: misunderstood the promise of v 9.
4. Devotion: misunderstood the purpose of the death of Christ.
5. Imperfect faith can still contain genuine devotion.

Application

1. Timing: God's delays are not God's denials. Christ works according to divine wisdom, even when circumstances seem confusing or painful. We want God to act in our time and according to our expectation.
2. Purpose: Ultimate purpose of suffering and deliverance is His glory and then His care for us. Ask, how God is gloried in my suffering.
3. Opportunities: Trials may become opportunities for God's glory and for deeper faith in Him. Like Mary, Martha, and the disciples, believers are called to trust the Lord even when they cannot fully understand His timing or purposes.
4. Boldness: Out time to live and serve the Lord is fixed by God. Being a coward and taking all kinds of precautionary steps and not being faithful isn't going to lengthen it; and being bold in the face of enemies isn't going to shorten it because it is what God has ordained it to be. Apostle Thomas understood this at least partially; and he had the courage to go with Jesus and encouraging others to follow Jesus to the Cross.