

# Lazarus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, as you mentioned in prayer just now, this is the final one of what we've been calling our resurrection case studies. And that is the instances in the scripture which identify raisings from the dead.

And as we've mentioned each time in the past, it's not resurrection in the sense of Christ's resurrection, because that was unique up to that point in the sense that Christ rose again with his resurrection body, which had different qualities to the body that he had, same body, but different qualities to the life in which he conducted his earthly ministry.

Whereas these souls who were brought back from the dead were restored simply with their old earthbound bodies, we might say. So they are raisings from the dead, they're not technically resurrections in the sense of Christ, but it is easier for us to focus on them as such in the sense of being raised from the dead is something that no one but God is able to do.

In the Old Testament, he did an occasion, as we've seen in our studies of these, used his servants, the prophets, used his servant Elijah to raise the widow of Zanaapha's son in 1 Kings 17, the first of our case studies there.

We also saw how he used Elisha to raise the Shunammite's son in 2 Kings 4, and to use Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead in Acts 9, and then Eutychus who had died in Troas.

[ 1 : 27 ] Paul was used of the Lord to raise Eutychus back to life in Acts 20. And most recently we've looked at those raisings from the dead that our Lord himself undertook, namely the widow of Nain's son in Luke chapter 7, and then the raising of Jairus' daughter in Mark chapter 5, although that particular raising is the most widely testified.

All the other instances only have one source document, you might say, whether it's the Acts of the Apostles for Tabitha and Eutychus, whether it's the first Kings for the raising of the widow of Zanaapha's son, or second Kings for the raising of the Shunammite's son.

But the raising of Jairus' daughter, interestingly, is both in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is testified in all three of those Gospel accounts, but not John.

Whereas the raising of Lazarus is only in John's account. And yet, we've taken it last because, well not just because, but also because it is the fullest account.

The incident is the most fully narrated of all the accounts of one being raised from the dead. And there are reasons for this. Almost an entire chapter is devoted to this particular incident.

[ 2 : 44 ] And there are, as we say, reasons for this. We have to recognise always context, where anything that Jesus does, or in fact anything in Scripture, is concerned.

And where the raising of Lazarus is concerned, we see right at the beginning of the chapter that it is, in a sense, deliberative. Deliberative. Deliberative in the sense that Jesus deliberates over it. It is a willful action to go beyond the time, and to make sure that Lazarus has not just only just died, but is well and truly dead, four days before he is going to bring him back to life.

So it is deliberative. This is not reactive in the sense that nobody has come, and said, I'll dip the Lord's coattails and say, oh, my little daughter's dying, or my servant is dying, and so on.

Please come and heal him again, or raise him back to life, or whatever. This is not reactive. This is deliberative. Because even before Jesus receives the message, we must take it that he already knows that Lazarus is sick, and the prayer to which his father has granted an answer, which he makes reference to, in verses 42 and 43, or 41 and 42, rather, when he says, Jesus lifted up, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, 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 now.

[ 4 : 15 ] The people that stand by, both the apostles, and also the crowd that were there, this is a widely witnessed miracle. But when does Jesus make this prayer?

We must take it that he makes this prayer, either at the time, or before he receives the message about Lazarus. And when he receives the message, although he loves Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, he does not come immediately.

It is deliberative. He intends this raising of the dead to be as specific as it is. He intends it to be a depth of miracle, not just sort of reactive, not just sort of incidental, pretty soon after the person died, but he intends Lazarus to be so completely dead as nobody has ever done this kind of thing before.

You know, where the Shunammite's son was concerned, she laid him in the upper room, she then went to fetch Elisha. It was all in the same day. When the widow of Zarephath's son died, we must assume again, it was in the same day.

Jailus' daughter had only just died, almost certainly within the hour, when Jesus raised her to life. The widow of Nain's son would have died that day, because the funeral procession was going out to the tombs when Jesus met them and so on.

[ 5 : 43 ] Likewise, Tabitha, it would have been within 24 or 48 hours that Peter came. So they're all very recent at the point of death. She hasn't been buried yet, Tabitha, at this point when Peter comes to her.

Jesus intends that this should be not just a recent or quick raising again from the dead in that sense, because that has been done.

If he was to raise Lazarus from the dead quickly after he died, if he had gone immediately to Bethany, and even then, Lazarus had already died by the time he got there, maybe that day, and then he raised him to life, he would simply have done that which had already been done for some others.

If he were to go so quickly that he managed before, he died, and just to raise him again to health and strength, to heal him from an illness, albeit a fatal illness, he would simply be doing that which he had done already for many others.

But by leaving it four days, and deliberating upon it that Lazarus would have been laid in the grave four days, there is a depth of miracle here.

[ 6 : 55 ] There is a deliberative action such as has never been done for anyone else. We could say, perhaps, and if we say, it's with all reverence, that Lazarus is in the grave longer than our Lord was in his grave when he rose again to life.

That's not to cast any aspersion, but it is a mathematical observation. Four days he had been dead when the Lord rose to the earth. It was intended that it should be widely witnessed.

And also, we can see in the context that it was intended to build up to what we might call, again in all reverence, the finale of our Lord's earthly ministry.

Now obviously, the miracles of Christ are sprinkled through his earthly ministry. Jesus did not come explicitly to do miracles.

That was the thing for which the crowds followed him. That was the thing they desperately wanted. If he could heal their loved one or help them and so on, in some way, what they could get out of him. That was sadly, perhaps, what they were often hanging on him for.

[ 8 : 04 ] But we remember that Jesus himself did not say that he had come to do miracles. That was not his purpose. But rather, we read in Mark chapter 1, for example, when the disciples found Jesus praying out on the hillside in the early morning, said, All men seek for thee.

And he said unto them, Let us go to the next house, that I may preach there also. For therefore came I forth. As far as Jesus himself is concerned, his purpose was to preach and to declare the kingdom of God.

That it had come. It had come in his person. The kingdom of God had come amongst men and women. And yes, by his presence, that also, by his actions, would roll back the frontiers, as it were, of darkness, the symptoms of sin and death, the disease, the illness, the leprosy, the blindness, the deafness, would all be rolled back in his presence.

Where God is, there cannot be any of these things that were standing in his way. It's also an observation that some have mentioned, which, you know, you can take it or leave it to an extent. But there is no record, of course, of anybody dying in our Lord's earthly presence. Now, let's not think, oh, wait a minute, that can't be right.

[ 9 : 28 ] Is it? Well, as far as I can ascertain, that is the case. That nobody is recorded as dying in our Lord's physical presence. Even the thieves on the cross die after Jesus is himself dead.

So where Christ is, nobody actually dies. Where the Lord of life is, nobody dies. We probably have to qualify that a little and say that, you know, once his earthly ministry was begun, because it tends to be thought, traditionally, that, you know, one reason there's no mention of Joseph and Jesus I don't like is because Joseph was thought to have died by the time Jesus' earthly ministry began. If that is the case, it is inconceivable that the eldest son in a family would not be around when his father, in inverted commas, passed away.

He would be there. He would be the head of the family then. He would be looking after things. He would be sitting in beside his earthly father as he expired, along with his mother and all the family and so on.

So he would be present in that sense. But his earthly ministry had not begun. There is no record of anybody dying in the presence of our Lord whilst he was on earth.

[10:48] And you can read all manner of theological correctness into that, that, you know, where the Lord of life is, death cannot exist. So that's another possibility. And this is one reason some people say why this is why he couldn't go to Bethany.

He could not be there as Lazarus expired. He had to make sure he was well and truly dead because nobody can die where Jesus comes. Yeah, you can take that and leave it as you want and maybe think about it.

It's a good thing for us to think about. But it is a build-up to Jesus' finality, as it were, and his earthly ministry. If you look at the miracles that Jesus conducted, particularly, let's limit ourselves to John's account of the Gospel.

Because that's the one we're in here. So in chapter 2, you've got the wedding in Cana of Galilee. That's really sort of before his proper ministry began. And this is in front of lots of witnesses, but it's an act of compassion when the wine runs out.

And then in chapter 4, you've got the sort of quiet, discreet healing of the nobleman's son who is in Capernaum. Jesus is in Cana when it happens, and the nobleman's son is in Capernaum.

[11:57] So he's healed at a distance, quietly. Chapter 5, you've got the healing of the man who's laid sick at the pool of Bethesda who was laid there for 38 years. And that's in Jerusalem.

And that sort of raises the profile a bit more, and that then has witnesses to it afterwards, and it's beginning to raise Jesus' profile. But in between the other chapters, he's simply got teaching and confrontations, yes, with the fantasies and so on, but it's teaching and it's sort of speeches that he's making and unpacking his vision of the kingdom of God.

Chapter 6, you've got the feeding of the 5,000. But still, at the end of that, chapter 6, you've got people turning away from him. So the feeding of the 5,000, again, an act of compassion and of practical help.

And in chapter 9, you've got the healing of the man born blind. Now, apart from the feeding of the 5,000, which, yes, is an act of compassion. It's a greater miracle in the sense that it helps 5,000 plus people at one go.

You've almost got an ascending importance, if you like, an ascending power of what is being involved here. Turning water into wine, which we couldn't do it, obviously, but it's a quiet act of compassion.

[13:11] Not many people realize it's a miracle, so that's kind of low key. Healing of the noble one's son in Capernaum, that's at a distance. It's not there and then in front of all the Christ. The pool of Bethesda, the only people who witness it actually happening are the fellow sufferers set around the pool who see it happening.

And then the Jews give the man into trouble for carrying his bed on the Sabbath day and so on. So there's confrontation, yes, but these are comparatively discreet.

Feeding of 5,000, everybody sees it. It's going up the way now. Man born blind in chapter 9, what makes this distinctive is that not only had he become blind, but he had never seen in his life.

He'd been always blind from birth. This was a congenital condition which Jesus completely reverses. Opens the eyes of a man born blind as he himself said, you know, in all the history of the world, he says to the Jewish leaders, it's never been that somebody should open the eyes of one born blind.

And this to him was proof that Jesus was from God. He says, this I know, whereas I was blind, now I see. How can you not know where this man is from?

[14:26] And of course, this means that they are even more antagonistic to Jesus. And that is the most recent major miracle, again, in Jerusalem when this happens.

And then the Jews are seeking, or the Jewish opposition is seeking to destroy Jesus. Chapter 10, verse 31, is what the disciples are referring to.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. The confrontation is growing. It is heightening. It's building up. And now, you've got this deliberative, well-witnessed, well-testified act of raising somebody to life who had been in the grave four days.

This is, as far as John's account is concerned, is the last miracle Jesus does before his own resurrection. It is the culmination of all that has gone before.

All the miracles, all the teaching, all the work of the kingdom, it is building up to, this is what God's kingdom is about, about bringing people back from death.

[15:33] Bringing people back from spiritual death as well as physical death. From sin and from lostness and from the enslavement to the evil one and to darkness and death.

I bring people back from death, Jesus said. That's what I'm about. I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though he was dead, yet he will live.

And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Death will have no power over him. Yes, the body will be sloughed off, but death will have no power over him. This is what the kingdom is all about.

It is building up to this final, as it were, miracle. Now, of course, we have to recognize that in the other gospel accounts there are two, if you like, minor miracles that take place in the last week of Jesus' life.

But by and large, once Jesus enters Jerusalem in the triumphal entry, which of course we'll read about in John, we could read about in John chapter 12, of course, after that he doesn't do many miracles.

[16:37] In John's account he doesn't do any. But we have to recognize that in Matthew and Mark we've got the cursing of the fig tree, which you could say is a miracle. You've also got in Luke's account, you've got the healing of Malchus' ear in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When Peter takes his sword and smites off Malchus' ear, then Jesus says, suffer you thus far, and puts up his hand and heals as he is. Luke 22, verse 51. So that is a miracle in all fairness, but it's a reactive one.

And again, it's an act of compassion. But John doesn't have that on record. This is the last and greatest miracle John records.

And then it's the resurrection of Jesus. There's one final miracle in John's account, and that is the miraculous catch of fish in the last chapter. 153 fish that suddenly the disciples are able to bring in. And again, you could build a whole theological standard on that one. That's the final miracle recorded of Jesus. But this is the biggie. This is the build up to this finale of Jesus' ministry here.

[17:44] Because after this, in chapter 12, you've got the supper that they give him, and you've got then the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and then you've got his long soliloquies, his long teaching speeches to his disciples in chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, then he prays for his disciples, chapter 17, then chapter 18 goes over the group Kidron, and you've got Gethsemane, and then the trial and crucifixion and so on.

So an awful lot takes place. John is, in chapter numbers, we're only just over halfway through, but we're already about to enter the last week of Jesus' life.

So you see how vital, how central to everything that John is seeking to teach is the death and resurrection of Jesus. But just before that week begins, here you've got the raising of Lazarus, and it is deliberative.

Jesus intends it to be exactly as it works out. A certain man will say, named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha, it was that Mary which anointed the Lord of Ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

Now we don't read about that until chapter 12, but it was so widely known in the church by the time John was writing that he mentions it here. And therefore his sister sent him, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

[19:04] And Jesus heard that, he said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now obviously that must mean it's not going to end in death.

Yes, it would result in death, but death would not have the final word. Death will not be the last word on this sickness. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Again, we could unpack a whole sermon and get the name order there and the significance of Martha and the long conversation Jesus has with her and so on. When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

And we might think that verse six is a little surprising. When he had heard, you might think, but when he had heard that he was sick, he still abode two days. And yet, when he had heard that he was sick, he still abode two days.

And even though he heard he was sick, he still abode two days. But rather we have, when he heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

[ 20 : 08 ] And he knew it would take a couple more days to travel there. So this is the liberator. he intends this sickness to result in the death of Lazarus.

Why? So that, as he says to his disciples, I am glad that I was not there to the intent he may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him.

Now, these disciples not already believe in him, but they do believe in him, but yet there is this need to recognize Jesus' total power over life and death.

It may seem to us at a superficial level that Jesus has disappointed the sisters. They have hoped that he's going to come quickly and he's going to heal Lazarus, he's going to stop him from dying, because after all, that is almost certainly why they have sent the message.

It's not in a pestering way, it's not saying, come quickly Lord, they're just saying, he who now loves is sick, and they're leaving it with the Lord. And the Lord is availing himself of that freedom of decision and opportunity.

[ 21 : 15 ] It's not because he doesn't love them that he isn't going, but rather Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus when he had heard therefore that he was sick.

He abode two days still in the same place. Why? Because he intends to do something greater than simply that which he has done for many others in terms of healing the sick, or even raising the very recently dead.

He intends to do something nobody's ever done before, and nobody probably ever will do again.

This which he intends to do is going to be the crowning glory of his entire ministry.

Now it is tempting for us to think that Jesus had let them down. We mustn't think that because he knows what he is doing. And as he knows what he's doing for Martha and Mary, so he knows what he is doing.

And sometimes the prayers that we make to the Lord appear to be getting a negative answer, or appear not to be getting the answer that we seek.

[ 22 : 22 ] Remember that this is part of the Lord's dealing with his people. He may hold off what they immediately desire in order to do or to give to them something much greater.

Way back in Isaiah 49, we read at verse 14, Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

But in chapter 54, we read verses 7 and 8, For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.

If God appears to withdraw from us for a time, yet it is not so that he punishes us or not so that he ignores us, it is because he intends to do something much better, much greater.

[ 23 : 28 ] This death of Lazarus, as it becomes clear, is costly to Jesus. He weeps over the effect of his death as on the sisters or the grief that it causes, the grief that death and sin brings into the world.

In Psalm 116, remember what we read, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

And that word that is translated precious in English, what it's actually mean is if you think of something precious like jewels or diamonds or whatever, well they don't come cheap.

This is what it means, costly. Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. He feels it. He is conscious of it. He senses it all.

But rather we have here Jesus saying, well, you know, we're staying still two more days. And then he says, right, let's go to Lazarus now. Let's go then. The disciples are not amazed that he's taken two days.

They're amazed that he's going at all. See, the Jews of late sought the stone thee. And are you going now? You're going back into harm's way. Are you going there again? Jesus answered,

they're not 12 hours in the day.

[ 24 : 37 ] This is maybe the 11th hour in terms of his earthly ministry, but there's still time to do great work. These things said he, and after that he said, our friend Lazarus sleepeth. But I go that I may awake him out of sleep.

Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. We don't really want to go back in the danger. But he's sleeping. Well, that's good. He's going to get better.

So if we were asking him a minute ago, you know, why are we going to go back into the mouth of danger again? Why are we going to take that risk? And if he's sleeping, well, he'll do well, so why do we need to go at all?

We might think, well, why didn't you go sooner, Lord? But now, maybe you don't need to go at all. He's going to sleep. He's going to do better. That's fine. He'll do well. You don't need to go, Lord. But he said, Howbeit Jesus spake of his death, but they felt he had spoken of taking a rest and sleep.

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead, but I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent you may believe. Nevertheless, let us go to him. Then said Thomas, which is called Bidimus, unto his fellow disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him.

[ 25 : 46 ] They expected that this would be the death of Jesus. And Thomas, for all he gets, criticizes a doubter, he's the one who has the courage, the safe one. If he's going, we have to go too. If he dies, we die with him.

That's what friends do, that's what the loyal disciples would do. Let us go, that we may die with him. He found that he lay in four days in the grave already. Bethany was nighed to Jerusalem about 15 furlongs off.

Now a furlong, as I'm sure most of you are aware, is an eighth of a mile. So 16 furlongs just the other side of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem.

Many of the Jews came to comfort Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. And Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him. But Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha to Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother hath not died.

But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give her thee. Look at the faith of this woman. She gets criticized a lot because of those few verses at the end of Luke chapter 10.

[ 26 : 51 ] But that's not the whole story of Martha and Mary. That's out of the snippet. This is a far bigger fact. This is the biggest single chunk of information we have about Martha and Mary.

And again, that wanted to build a whole sermon. Notice the word order at verse 5. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. We think of Mary and then Martha and Lazarus somewhere on the outside.

But Mary, yes, had chosen that good part, but Martha is the one who has described first and foremost, Jesus loved Martha and her sister, who doesn't even get named, and Lazarus.

And Martha is the one engaging in this conversation of faith with the master. Martha is the one who makes this statement of faith certainly comparable to anything that Peter makes and says to the Philippi.

You know, she says, yeah, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. You know, she doesn't get, oh, blessed are thou, Martha, you know, because man has not revealed this to you, but my father, which is in heaven, like Peter, gets.

[ 27 : 54 ] But here is this statement of faith from this woman of faith, devout and humble and devoted to the Lord. Martha doesn't get half a good press she should do, but this chapter certainly is very much one that, if you like, restores the balance between the two sisters.

The master has come, she says to her sister, and called for me. So again, he says, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus isn't actually speaking to her when he says, where have you laid him?

Because again, distinction in the authorised version between singular and plural, verse 34, where have you laid him? It's plural. He's saying it to the people in general, where have you, all of you, laid him?

They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus went. So he's groaning in his spirit now, as some commentators still implies, he's only just keeping in the tears, he's asking the question, sort of almost to try and bring under control his emotions, but once he begins to go to the tomb, the tears pour from his eyes.

It's a quiet, gentle weeping, it's not like the sort of wailing, which is a different word for the weeping described in verse 33, the Jews also weeping, which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

[ 29 : 11 ] Then Jesus went, it's a quiet, it's a gentle, tearful mourning here. Behold, how he loved her. Then Jesus, again groaning in the spirit, comes to the grave, it was a cave, a stone there upon him, take away the stone.

Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he sticketh he had been dead four days, so it's never been done before. Jesus said, and have said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.

Again, conversation, not with me, but with Martha. Then he has this prayer of thanksgiving to his father. And then everybody who was there, the Jews who were there from Jerusalem, the apostles who were there, all those standing by, Jesus is saying, it's for them that I ask this favor of you, father, it's for them so that they could see it is this finale of my ministry that before I go to suffer myself, before I have this final showdown with the authorities and the powers of darkness in Jerusalem, that in all the miracles that he has done, the winning of Canaan, the healing of the nobleman's son, the pool of Bethesda, the feeding of the 5,000, the opening of the eyes of the man born blind, and now the raising of the dead, it has been building up and up and up and up, and so that by the end of that time, nobody in Jerusalem, nobody in Israel itself could be in any doubt about the confrontation that is happening here in Jerusalem.

It is between the power of one who opens the eyes of the blind, who feeds the hungry, who raises the dead, who heals those who have been sick for generations, it is the power of light and goodness over and against darkness and self-interest.

Now they may not doubt that he has the power to do all these things. They may not deny that he has done all these wonderful miracles. The point is not that they're not really sure that they believe in who he claims to be.

[ 31 : 11 ] The point is that for many of the authorities, maybe they know, maybe they believe, but it doesn't make any difference. They are still opposed to Jesus of Nazareth, and there is such a heart in man who even with all the evidence that demands the verdict, even though they see what Christ has done and the power of good and light and mercy and compassion that is in him still choose darkness.

It is illogical. It is inexplicable by any means other than the sheer power of darkness over the human soul. It is only Christ who can lighten and darkness.

It is only Christ who can set free. But the stage is set and the evidence has been accumulating throughout Jesus' ministry in such a way that when that final showdown happens, there is no doubt about where the two sides are drawn up and no doubt about who is on the Lord's side and who is on the Lord's side.

That when it comes to that final confrontation, there is darkness and there is light, there is evil and there is good. There is the Lord and there is those who are against it.

And if anyone was in doubt, raising one from the dead who has been dead four days leaves nobody in any doubts. And the Pharisees' solution to that? Well, they wanted to kill Lazarus too.

[ 32 : 41 ] Let's kill him again as if Jesus couldn't raise him from the dead again. It's not even logical. But this is the confrontation building up. Jesus intends that everyone should see and know just who he is and just where this power comes from.

Now, we read, of course, that he addresses the dead. When he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Now, as one commentator has pointed out, this is the only time apart from on the cross when he gives a loud cry just before he expires. It's the only time we read of Jesus crying with a loud voice, and it's to raise the dead.

Job says in chapter 14, verses 14 and 15, If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.

Thou shalt call and I will answer thee. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. You see, this is Job, which is probably the oldest written book in the entire scripture.

[ 33 : 49 ] And there, way back in this most ancient of scriptures, we have this, Thou shalt call and I will answer. If a man die, shall he live again?

All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer. Likewise, Jesus had said way back in chapter 5 of John's account to the gospel. Chapter 5, verse 28.

Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth. They had done good unto the resurrection of life and they had done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

How can the dead hear anything? The only thing the dead can hear is the voice of God. It brings back from the dead and at the last day it shall raise everybody up whether to damnation or whether to blessing and eternal justification.

He cried with a loud voice Lazarus come forth and he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grey clothes and his face was bound about with a napkin.

[ 34 : 56 ] Jesus said I then loose him and let him go. When we come forth from the deadness of our old life there is still the trappings of it around us. We may still not be able to see clearly as perhaps we will come to do so.

There may still be the as it were the spiritual napkin around our faces that may still be the grave that stop us from walking clearly and easily but we are alive. We are alive when we hear the voice of God.

Lazarus come forth. Whatever your name is it is the Lord who calls his children by name.

Remember what he says in chapter 10. How the good shepherd calls his old he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them and the sheep follow him for they know his voice.

He leadeth them out he calleth his own sheep by name. He could just have said you're in the grave come out but no he calls him by his name Lazarus come forth and every single soul that has ever been born again that has ever been converted and saved has been because the Lord addresses his call directly to them personally.

He calls them by the name that he has caused them to be given in the first place. Every name that we have we think our mums and dads chose it. Yes they did they were the human agency but who put it in their mind who put it in their heart what to call their little son or their little daughter is the Lord who put it in their minds and is the Lord who gave you the name that you have there is the Lord who calls by that name that each one should be drawn to him and some will turn away and some will not listen but the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God Lazarus come forth and he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grey clothes and of course there is the reaction then many of the Jews which came to many and had seen the things which Jesus did believed on him it is used of some as a means of their conversion but some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done now that is not going to make them popular with the Pharisees we shouldn't make them think so they were on the side of the Pharisees these are probably just gossips who love to go to the Pharisees and say see that guy you hate you'll never believe what he's done now you should have seen what he did

[ 37 : 22 ] I saw it with my own eyes you won't believe it honestly and just stir the pot and wind up the Pharisees a bit more they're probably not specially on the side of the Pharisees they just want to add a little bit of spice and juice to the rumour there they're telling them what things he has done but they know what the Pharisees reaction will be because the stage is being set and the build up is coming and the contrast is not between one kind of neutrality and another it is increasingly between good and evil between darkness and light with all the miracles and all the good that Jesus has done with all the teaching he has given with all the proclamation of the kingdom the kingdom of God has come amongst them and this is the condemnation as we read in chapter 3 when he speaks to Nicodemus light is coming to the world and then love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil nowhere is that seen more clearly than in the gospel account of John and nowhere is it thrown into relief more sparkly than in the raising of Lazarus this is the finale of all Jesus works in this world in his earthly ministry it is the culmination of all the miracles that he has done it is not for nothing it's the last of our resurrection case studies it's not the last chronologically remember that the raising of Tabitha then the raising of Eutychus that will come afterwards through the agency of Peter and then Paul so that will be later on but this is if you like the definitive raising from the dead this is the power that Christ has over deadness this is the power that Christ has over decay and over the ultimate symptom of sin because death is by definition separation from God death is what enters into the garden when Adam and Eve sin they don't drop dead they're them but they are separated from God and when we are expired from this life when we die physically then the last

opportunity to close in with Christ has gone however long our souls go on in eternity there will never be another chance to come back and do it again there will never be another chance to change what we have opportunity for in this life

Lazarus is already a friend of Jesus he is raised from the dead those who are not we know they if we do not utilize the opportunities that the Lord gives us if we do not see the way that history is building the way that providence is unfolding that this gulf is ever widening and the contrast is becoming clearer between darkness and light between the miracles of Christ and the evil of the world in its unbelieving state and if we cannot choose clearly between the two then we will be as lost as lost can be Christ intends this final act it is deliberative it is a depth of miracles such as he has never done before it is widely witnessed it is testified both to those who will believe and to those who will doubt and deny it is intended to leave none in any doubt as to who he is or what he has claimed to be and what he has come to do this is the Messiah who is proclaimed to you this is the Messiah who is every bit as alive tonight and present amongst his people as he has promised to be as he was 2000 years ago he is more available to you now than he would have been if you were physically there at Bethany when he raised

Lazarus from the dead he is more available he is more ready to receive he is more there for you than he would have been then if we can say that with all reverence this Christ this Saviour this Redeemer demonstrates that there is no power of death no power of decay no power of sin over which he does not have absolute sovereign control there is nothing you can say oh yes but if you only knew me and how dead I am if you only knew me and how sinful I am who do you think you are talking about who do you think you are talking to you know the Lord doesn't have power to reverse the power of your sin the Lord doesn't have enough blood to shed to wash away your sin that the Lord sacrificed on the cross somehow wasn't quite enough if only you could do more good deeds that would really be good that would really pay for it well though Christ has gone to the cross Christ himself has died and then risen again to demonstrate there is no power in heaven and earth that he does not exercise even your sin cannot keep you away from the Lord if you will turn and repent and believe you may be dead in trespasses and sins but here is Christ's word to the dead Lazarus come forth and he that was dead came forth that is what Lazarus did even when he was dead he came out to where Jesus called him how dead are you that I do not know friend only you and the Lord do but the question is not how dead are you it is what will you do about it now when the Lord who raises the dead through his prophets through his apostles and through his own personal ministry when the Lord calls to you by name what do you do bless Eden from the family to■