

# Lazarus

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, as most of you will be aware, we've been looking in these past few weeks at some of the individuals whom the Lord, during his ministry, whether earthly ministry or as we saw last week with Saul of Tarsus and to a lesser extent Ananias, even in his risen capacity, those whom the Lord addresses by name.

Now, we said that altogether, as far as we can work out, there were nine such individuals, with Ananias, of course, that would make ten. Well, the reason we're looking at Lazarus then today is not so much for his resurrection, he's being raised from the dead, we looked at that not long ago in the context of the resurrection case studies, when Lazarus was the final one of that.

But really by the fact that he is addressed by name by the Lord, and that makes him special. That makes him a rarity in the New Testament context, and the more so because he is in fact unique in that he is addressed by the Lord when he is still dead.

Lazarus is the only one who is spoken to by the Lord from a state of death. And here we have it, verse 43. When he had thus spoken, thus had spoken, 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 in the napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loosen and let him go. He's already been loosed from the bonds of death, now he just needs help getting unworned from the grey clothes.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] But this makes him unique. He is the only one whose soul must have been at least departed from his body for a time.

Four days he had been in the grave. So he did four days his soul away from his body. Now we may struggle with the idea of, well, if his soul had gone to glory to be with the Lord, then how would it be right to call that soul back again to the sufferings of this earth, especially when his body had been sick and weak and dying and so on?

How can that be right? Surely, if you love someone, you want them to be with the Lord and have that joy. But Jesus isn't doing this just for Lazarus. Now we know that with the Lord, a thousand years as a watch in the night, and a thousand years is one day, one day is a thousand years, and so on.

And even if you were to do the maths, you could, for example, calculate somebody who was, say, widowed with their husband or wife and then were 30 years waiting for them, waiting to be reunited with them if they were both believers, reunited in glory.

For them, that's 30 long years. But if you were to take mathematically, I know we're not meant to take it precisely mathematically in this way, but if you were to do the arithmetic and say a watch in the night was like three hours.

[ 3 : 0 4 ] So if you were to take, you know, a thousand years is like three hours. So what would 30 years translate into? And, you know, if you were to perhaps do the maths, not irreverently, but I know it doesn't work out exactly this way, then somebody who had been, who was the one who was widowed, one who was taken away from their loved one, as they sort of got into glory, you know, what would be 30 long years for their loved one down below would be like eight minutes or less.

May I'm going to eat. So four days is probably only a matter of a minute and a half or like seconds in glory. You only just got there. Wow, you know, see everything before you say, well, actually you have to come down for a wee while to come back again.

I know a thousand years as I watch in the night. It's just a way of describing that eternity with the Lord is not like time here. So Lazarus' soul, yes, it would have been tasting the beauty, the glory of heaven, but it was called back again for a greater purpose.

And the greater purpose is the glory of God. And the greater purpose is that others may see and either believe, as some of them did, because we read verse 45, many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did believed on him.

Well, you can't believe when somebody's raised from the dead. Nothing is going to make you believe. But they believed and also it gave glory to our Lord. One reason why he calls with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, and also prays audibly beforehand.

[ 4 : 40 ] You know, we read verse 41, when he had taken away the stone, So Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always.

But because of the people would stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

So he's praying audibly. Everyone can hear what he's saying. He is addressing his father. And, you know, the Pharisees and others had accused Jesus of casting out demons by the help of Beelzebub, by the help of the prince of the demons, using the devil, in other words, to cast out devils.

So Jesus is saying openly, he's addressing his heavenly father. Everyone can see he is speaking to God. He's addressing him as father. He's calling for the Lord's help. And then having called for the Lord's help, he speaks out loud and clear so that when Lazarus is raised from the dead, everybody can see not only that he has been raised, having been four days dead and well and truly beginning to decompose, as Martha makes clear in the previous verse, but also that he does so by the help and the authority and the power of the living God.

Now, Elijah and Elisha, when we looked at our resurrection case studies and so on, they raised the dead as God's servants. And as servants, they raised the dead by entreaty.

[ 6 : 07 ] You know, they begged God's favour and he granted it. But Christ is not here as a servant, he's as a son. A son who raised the dead, not by entreaty, but by authority.

Because when he says to his father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, not as though this was sunk in a reality, but rather, I knew that thou hearest me always. It's not for my benefit, Lord, but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

So everyone can see and hear that Jesus is in communication with his father, that he's asking for his father's authority and help to do this, and getting it. It is by the power of the living God that Jesus, the Christ, God the Son, has raised the dead in the full sight of all those who witnessed it.

So that is the purpose why Lazarus' soul is called back from eternity into the veil of time and into the confinement and constriction of that body that he had.

We have to take it, of course, that he who had been sick, you know, the chapter began, of course, as you know, we didn't read this early part of the chapter, but a certain man was sick, named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

[ 7 : 25 ] Therefore his sister sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. He was ill. He was dying. But now that he's been raised to life, I think we can safely take it, whatever ailment he was dying for, from is gone.

He's back into the pink of health again, as it were. Now, in the fullness of time, Lazarus will age and die. In the fullness of time, he will die for good, as it were.

He hasn't been raised in the same way that Jesus was raised on the third day, complete with resurrection body. Lazarus is restored to his own body, his earthbound body, but he is raised from the dead back to that life.

And the witness of it is so that everybody can see and know that this is the power of God doing it. Openly and publicly, Jesus addresses God as his father to show that this is not through Beelzebub, this is not through the evil one, not through the devil or any evil spirit.

This is through the power of God. But as we mentioned before, the thing we're focusing on today is not so much the fact of Lazarus is being raised from the dead, although you can't escape that with Lazarus, is the fact that he is called by name.

[ 8 : 46 ] And being called by name, that cry or that summons, that goes all the way from time into eternity in this instance. But this is not to be taken, although it is a unique instance, it is simply to be taken, as Christ teaches, as a token of that which will happen.

In John 5, verse 25, we read verily, verily, I'll say unto you, 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.

The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. We might say, well, what about those who don't hear? Well, they'll just stay dead, because they're already dead spiritually, and they'll stay dead eternally.

But those who are his will hear, as he says in John 10, I shall hear my voice. I call them by name. Verses 28 and 29 of John 5, we read again, marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, of which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

They that have done good unto the resurrection of life. They that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. It becomes an eternal death for them. Yes, they obey.

[ 10 : 03 ] They hear. Well, no, we said they wouldn't hear, but they hear in the sense of answering the command, but they don't hear the voice of their shepherd. They just hear summons, and they are raised not to honor, but to dishonor, not to salvation, but to damnation.

This is what Jesus teaches. They shall come forth. They that have done good to the resurrection of life. They that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Now, of course, we have to not qualify that, but unpack that to recognize that there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Any of our righteousness that we have, Psalms tells us, Psalm 14, for example, none doeth good, no, not one. Any that it says, have done good, they said to Jesus other times, you know, what shall we do that we might work the works of God?

And Jesus answered them and said, and this is John 6, verse 29, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom ye have sent. When we put our faith and our trust in Christ, then his righteousness becomes our righteousness.

That which he has done becomes that which is ascribed to us. And this is why we're able to say, or Christ is able to say, they that have done good. The only good that we have is Christ's good.

[ 11 : 19 ] And the only good that we are unable to do by grace is to believe on him and to put our trust in him. Then his righteousness becomes our righteousness. It's as though if you were to say, dress somebody completely in the clothes of a different person and walk down the street you might say, oh, they're so dumb.

Oh, no, it's not. Oh, I thought it was them because they look just like them because they're wearing somebody else's clothes. We're wearing the righteousness of Christ is the clothes that we begin then to look like him because we are clothed in his righteousness.

Where does our sin go? Our sin goes to him. He takes it upon himself upon the cross. He puts it to death in his own death upon the cross. And we then, if we are trusting in him, are saved and redeemed.

So this is what he says. The hour is coming and now it is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live. So what we are raised to then is either damnation or salvation depending on whether or not our trust is in Christ because none of us has any righteousness of our own.

So he addresses Lazarus and he also, as we read, he addresses him with a loud voice. Now this is unusual. It's not unique but it is unusual for the Lord because the only other occasion that is mentioned in Jesus' entire life and ministry when he speaks with a loud voice is the cry from the cross just before he dies.

[ 12 : 51 ] Luke 23, verse 46, we read, when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And having said this, he gave up the ghost.

Matthew tells us, chapter 27, and verse 50, Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. Now, John, of course, tells us that the last thing Jesus says is it is finished.

Now, that is a single word in the Greek. It's something which you could cry even in the Aramaic which Jesus would have spoken. It's one or at the most two words and it would be cried out almost as a breathing out of his final cry.

And then, what Luke tells us, the last thing that he says, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, would be almost as I sat and breathed out quietly. He goes, only Luke records it.

Now, what is Luke's source? Luke's source is almost certainly Mary or one of the main sources Luke has is Mary. Who would be right up there at the cross? And the other, see the two great details that we have for what Jesus says at the cross, they are Luke and they are John.

[ 13 : 58 ] And of course, who is right up there at the cross? Mary, who is Luke's major source and John, who is right there with Mary. You know, come and behold thy son, behold thy mother and so on.

So they are the ones able to remember and record for the benefit of the gospel narrative the final things Jesus said. The loud cry which is heard from a distance but perhaps what he cries is not entirely coherently heard.

The loud cry, the fact of the loud cry is recorded by Matthew, it's recorded by Luke but only John perhaps has the idea of what the cry is. It is fresh.

The loud cry is rare. It's the only occasion when Jesus makes a loud cry other than this loud voice that he uses to summon Lazarus from the dead.

Isaiah 42 tells us at verse 2, He shall not cry nor the thought nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. It is a rare thing but it is not an unknown thing.

[ 15 : 03 ] And we have this cry from the cross and we have this cry summoning Lazarus from the grave. Either when Jesus himself enters into death or when he calls another out of death.

You know in Numbers chapter 23 remember what Balaam says about Israel that the shout of a king is amongst them. Chapter 23 verse 21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob.

Neither have he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with them and the shout of a king is among them. Jesus' loud cry is rare. It's not unique but it's rare.

And he uses this loud cry to call forth Lazarus from the dead. Now Lazarus is an unusual character we might say. He is very much the focus of this chapter 11 he's being raised from the dead.

But you know other than we meet him also in chapter 12 when we read six days before the Passover came to Bethany Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was which had them dead whom he raised from the dead.

[16:07] There they made him a sucker. Martha served and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. And because he was there as a living witness of Christ's power we read the enemies of Jesus wanted not only to take Jesus but they might also wanted to kill Lazarus to put him to death because by reason of him this is chapter 12 verse 11 many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.

So Lazarus becomes a focus for their enmity too but that's all we hear about them. You know the famous incident when Jesus is at Martha and Mary's house in chapter 10 and where he says to Martha Martha you know they're recovered and troubled with many things and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.

There's no mention of Lazarus there. If Jesus is in their house it must be the house of Lazarus also because it's their house in Bethany but Lazarus isn't mentioned at all in that brief incident in Luke.

Now next time we look at those called by name it will be marked that Lord that we look at. So we'll look at that incident there but Lazarus isn't mentioned but what he is mentioned you know not he but the name Lazarus uniquely again appears in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 where Jesus for the only time in his entire ministry that we have any record of names a character in a parable.

It's the only time that he gives a name to any character in a parable at all and he doesn't name you know everybody else he makes mention of Abraham of course but Abraham's a well known character to all of his audience but you know we read there's a certain rich man that was clothed in purple and finally and fared sumptuously every day there was a certain beggar named Lazarus which was laid at his gate full of sores.

[18:03] Why does he name this individual? Well he's suffering he's diseased he's obviously dying from his wounds and so on came to pass the beggar died was carried by the angels in Gabriel's bosom the rich man also died and was buried and he in hell lifted up his eyes being in torment and seared Abraham and Lazarus in his pussy and he cried and said father Abraham have mercy and he said Lazarus and he may dip the tip of his finger in water and so on but Abraham said remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things and likewise Lazarus evil things but now he is covered and thou art tormented there's this always mention of this individual Lazarus who is included in this parable we don't know why I want to be able to say again now this is the reason why I mean we're going to unpack this and explain the mystery but we can't we don't know why it is that Jesus named an individual in a parable the only time and why it was Lazarus because he's met

Lazarus the name is mentioned here but there's no mention of him in Luke's account when Jesus goes to the house of Martha and Mary so there's all these enigmas and strange things here surrounding the name and the person of Lazarus now the name Lazarus is a Greek name it means whom God aids but it's a Greek form of a Hebrew name Eleazar Eleazar which means God is helper now some of you will know that Aaron's son that succeeded him was called Eleazar Exodus 28 verse 1 Eleazar is the son of Aaron that succeeds because his elder sons died beforehand and that means God you know God is helper so you know Lazarus meaning whom God aids or whom God helps it's simply a different slightly different interpreting of the same name in the same way as people take the name Jesus to mean just saviour although it is in fact the Greek form of the Hebrew

Joshua means Jehovah is salvation but salvation saviour saving it's all there in the name and so likewise helping or whom God aids Lazarus the Greek form Eleazar or like Moses' son Eleazar it's the same name slightly tweaked as it were which simply means my God is helper and that's in Exodus 18 verse 4 as we've been looking at in previous weeks in the evening so it's a Greek form of a Hebrew name that means God is helper or my helper and Lazarus whom God helps or whom God aids but the biggest way in which Lazarus is aided by God is not simply being brought back to life the greatest privilege that Lazarus has is not simply being raised from the dead I would suggest to you with all respect that the greatest privilege in Lazarus in life is the friendship of Christ because we read earlier on in the chapter verse 5 now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus and the sisters had said behold he whom thou lovest

Lord behold he whom thou lovest is sick Jesus loved Lazarus that is the greatest privilege of his life it is the greatest privilege of our lives if we are in Christ to know that we are loved by Christ but what Lazarus is enabled to do by being raised from the dead is to witness for the glory of Christ the very fact that he exists in life and is there eating and drinking with Jesus in Bethany everybody sees it is to testify the fact that he is alive whereas once he was dead you know yes it's like amazing grace said you know those who were dead once was lost but now I'm found with blind but now I see well he once was dead and now he is alive he is alive not only in Christ he is alive because of Christ and his very living testifies to the power of Christ that is if you like his greatest witness his greatest testimony but his greatest privilege is the friendship is the love of Christ now you and I we will never be recorded in the pages of sacred scripture we have come too late in the history of God's work of salvation to have ourselves recorded in the Bible by grace we may be in the Lamb's book of life our names written there and all of our lives and characters and all that we have done and so on will be there as well but we are not in sacred scripture but we can still be a living testimony of what Christ has done because once we were dead in trespasses and sins if we are alive in Christ and people are unable to see a change in us it is because we have been brought from the dead to life we have been brought as it were out of the grave of our own putrefying self-obsession and self-idolatry and worship of the world and all the things in it that never satisfied of course brought out into the light and into life and into Christ where that new life is itself a witness and when you become a witness for the life that is in Christ what happens yes some people are touched and moved and even maybe converted as a means of that instrumentality but others will hate you you come to Christ you come alive in Christ and some people will hate you who didn't hate you before they may even wish you dead because you're an embarrassment you're a testimony to the fact that life in Christ is real that it's not just some dry dusty old kind of book you can ignore and pretend all religions are the same so that they know it's life in Christ life in all its fullness and there you are as a living breathing testimony to the fact that Christ has changed your life and brought you from death to life you are itself then a living witness and testimony you are one whom God aids

Lazarus and you may have been in the situation where you were just dying you may have been in the situation where you were so filled with pain and sorrow the dogs came and lit the swords and all the rest of it seemed as bad as it could possibly be but Christ brings us from death to life and we become those whom God aids we become a Lazarus in that sense we become a witness and testimony chapter 12 verse 9 much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there and they came not for Jesus sake only but that they might see Lazarus also whom he had raised from the dead but the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus to be brought from death to life is a work that only Christ can do you and I we can't do that ourselves you know you cannot imagine Lazarus there while his body is putrefying away in the grave saying

[ 25 : 25 ] I know I think I'll try and make myself alive again I'll try and blow really hard and breathe life back into myself he can't do that he doesn't have life in himself if I were to plug one end of my phone in again but not plug it into the socket into the source and say well what's wrong with it it's plugged in why isn't it charging up again because that may be fine but it's not at the source of the power and I may try really hard but if I'm not plugged to the source of the power I will have no life in me I cannot bring myself to life I cannot bring myself out of the grave I cannot change my own heart I cannot do enough good things because anything I do in a state of unbelief or unconversion is going to be near as what Augustine famously called splendid sins so here's the illustration before if you were underwater everything you do will be wet it doesn't matter what you do it doesn't matter if you take a towel down with you under the water and try to dry yourself under the water with it you will stay wet and everything you do in a state of sin in a state of unbelief will be itself sinful if you are going to get dry you have to come up out of the water you have to come up out onto the beach you have to let the sun dry you you have to be out of the element itself which is causing you to be wet you have to be out of the element which is causing you to be in a state of sin you have to be out of the state of death and into a state of life now Jesus calls Lazarus by name and as we said uniquely he is in a state of absolute total death when

Jesus calls him but this indicates to us that there is no limit to the power of where the voice and the reach of Christ's grace can go now that doesn't mean oh well so if you're dead that's all right you might still be converted after you're dead we're not talking about conversion here Lazarus was already in a state of grace in a state of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ loving the Lord Jesus Christ Jesus loved Martha her sister and Lazarus and they would if he loved them they would love him back again these are his friends these are they who believe in him they who love him maybe he has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her and as it was with her he cannot doubt the rest of the family too were devoted to Christ he physically died and he was physically brought back from the dead by the power of Christ but if there is nothing that

Christ cannot do physically there is nothing that Christ cannot do spiritually and we glorify Christ we glorify him when we hear his call hear his voice and respond to it you know what you just said we can't respond you just said we can't hear we cannot ourselves but he enables us to come do we really imagine that this was the only person of that name who had been dead and buried in Palestine at that time you know if Jesus were to shout Lazarus come forth what about all the other people who called Eleazar or Eleazar or Lazarus who were buried you know in other places nearby why didn't they just come forth because Jesus was addressing a particular person not just throwing a name out into the body he was addressing a particular soul just as when he calls an individual he addresses a particular soul he calls them by name he is the one who gives them the name at the outset he is the one who calls them by that name and when he calls almost always as we'll see it's not every time but almost always he calls them to himself my sheep hear my voice and they answer they will not hear the voice of a stranger but they will hear the voice of the shepherd to him the porter open mouth and the sheep hear his voice and he call his own sheep by name and leadeth them out this is what the lord is doing with Lazarus he is calling the one whom god aids now we may think ourselves oh god hasn't aided me much I mean look at the state my life as in look at the problems

I've got look at the difficulties I'm facing and so on all these things this world is a world of problems if you've got problems in this world it is simply an indication you're living in it but these problems are not they may be beyond us but they're not beyond god they're not beyond his reach and his health even in a state of grace even in a state of blessing there is going to be difficulty problems sufferings thorns in the flesh and all manner of difficulty in this world it is only when we leave this veil of tears behind that all these things are likewise also left behind but all these problems all these difficulties all these attacks upon us these we are enabled to overcome if we will take them to the lord and if we will lay them down at his feet and if we will entrust them not to our power but to his power you know remember what Martha said that great confession of faith she said on the day lord I believe that thou art the Christ the son of

God which should come into the world you know and she said I know that whatsoever you ask of God he will give it to you this is her faith the faith that she had the faith that her sister had we cannot take it that Lazarus did not have this faith of course he had this faith he loved the lord the lord loved him and he answers even from the grave itself Lazarus come forward the loud voice the shout of a king that almost unique instance where one is addressed and called with a loud voice not with a soft spoken dry remember what the lord does he does openly Jesus is not in the business of quiet murmuring muttering secrecy it is truly says to a lot of people don't tell anyone about this healing don't go and broadcast it go show yourself to the priest stop with the sacrifice that I need you but don't say anything to anybody else because he doesn't want to blaze up himself but he's not doing it in secret and he's not doing it at home in a corner

[ 32 : 08 ] Isaiah 45 verses verse 19 I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth I said not unto the seat of Jacob seeking me in vain I the lord speak righteousness I declare things that are right and the greatest right righteousness the lord declares is victory over death over death and over the grave and over the power of the devil Lazarus come forth and what he speaks to Lazarus he speaks in a spiritual sense to each of us lay down your burdens lay down the things that are attacking you overwhelming you and threatening to undo you in this life lay them down at the foot of this cross let his power take them up let his power answer them and deal with them and you and me we focus on responding to Christ's call because he has called and he does call and he called you by name and he calls you individually and he summons and invites that you would follow him and come out of the darkness out of the grave of unbelief and death into the lack of life yes there will be problems yes there are difficulties just like Lazarus had the grave clothes that were still it's like a straight jacket he had them he got free of them there's going to be problems but it's better to have the problems and be out and in the life and sunshine of life than to be have just dead still in the grave and be dead you're not conscious of the problems when you're dead you don't struggle spiritually when you're dead you don't wrestle with temptation when you're dead it's a same life the struggle the difficulty the problems the pain but the Lord is able to deal with them all we don't come to ourselves we come to him we don't hear our own voice speaking to ourselves we hear the voice of God addressing us when he had thus spoken he cried with a loud voice Lazarus come forth he calls all who are weak and heavy laden he calls all who are struggling in the darkness and decay and problems of this ongoing death of a fallen world without Christ he calls he summons and he calls vanity my sheep hear my voice he says well what about us and what about you do you hear the voice of Christ as he calls you today let us pray James lamberg says somehow come forth by following the