

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #216

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead Jesus Remains in Perea While Lazarus Died in Bethany JN 11.1-6

1 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 was laying sick, was the same one who later poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you always love is lying sick."

4 Because he heard this, Jesus said, *"This sickness will not result in death. Rather, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it."*

5 Now Jesus truly loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained where he was for two more days.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Somewhere in Perea
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	B. Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead
Title	I. Jesus Remains in Perea While Lazarus Dies in Bethany (Judea)

COMMENT:

The four days described in this reading ended Jesus' concentrated time of ministry in Perea. It was the end of February, and Jesus was soon to perform his 30th miracle.

After raising Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem, Jesus would spend a brief time in the outskirts of Judea, then make his final journey to Jerusalem for Passion Week. That trip would take him through portions of Perea again, but it would only be a few days.

Today's reading begins John's narrative in Ch. 11 of the greatest miracle of Jesus' ministry to this point--the resurrection of Lazarus. It occurred four days after Lazarus died, when the body had already begun to decompose. This was therefore the most supernatural miracle of Jesus' earthly ministry on a physical level.

The spiritual meaning of this "sign" was also the greatest of Jesus' ministry--it pointed to his own love, and resurrection perhaps more clearly than any other miracle. This miracle also had the strongest immediate impact of Jesus' ministry (as John points out at the end of the narrative) by setting up the conflicts with the Jewish leadership that led directly to Jesus' death.

On every level then, John Ch. 11 is one of the profoundest revelations, and turning points of Jesus' life.

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This passage introduces the circumstances for Jesus' raising of Lazarus, and also lays out the basic principle that pervades everything Jesus says and does.

The Lord was continuing his ministry in Perea when word came from Mary and Martha about the serious illness that had struck down their brother Lazarus and laid him out on his death bed. The sisters had contacted Jesus in desperation--believing that he would come and heal their brother. They wisely appealed to Jesus' deep and abiding love for Lazarus.

Jesus instantly knew that this news was crucial to the crowning work of his ministry--his own death and resurrection. The sickness was designed by his Father for the glory of his Son, and therefore would not end in death.

John made a point of twice emphasizing Jesus' love for Lazarus in these opening verses (11.3, 5), so that the readers of his gospel would understand the principle that everything Jesus did in his ministry was an expression of his love--even when the circumstances, or the timing of what he did appeared otherwise. This is one key to understanding John Ch.11.

A universal truth about the way God's love works in the life of those who believe in him pervades this miracle. Throughout the Gospel of John people make requests of Jesus. Soon a pattern develops. Jesus either ignores, or says "no" to their original request. Then he grants a huge "yes" answer later on...something far greater than they could imagine when they first asked.

The first disciples in Chapter 1, the first "sign"-miracle in Chapter 2, the conversation with Nicodemus in Chapter 3, the woman at the well in Chapter 4, healing of the paralyzed man in Chapter 5, and feeding of the 5000 in Chapter 6 all follow this pattern. In each situation people ask Jesus for one thing and do not receive it. Yet they do receive something different, yet immeasurably better from Him in the end.

The pattern reaches its peak in this text. As their brother's life is slipping away on his deathbed, sisters Martha and Mary ask Jesus to come heal him before it's too late. Once again He seemingly ignores their request, and Lazarus died.

The sisters were crushed with sorrow and confusion at this "no" reply, yet they held tenaciously to their faith in Jesus. Thankfully, "no" was just the prelude to a much more wonderful "yes" than they could conceive, because Jesus intended all along to heal Lazarus by raising him from the dead.

What's better than a death-bed miraculous healing? Resurrection.

SO much better!

So Jesus said to Mary: ***"Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?"***

The "greater yes" answer of raising Lazarus from the grave four days after he had died, was the most spectacular demonstration of the love, power and glory of God in the entire ministry of Jesus to that point. Jesus' initial "no" led into a much greater "yes."

Through his eye-catching repetition of the "no" = "yes" theme, John is teaching us a stellar lesson about the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

His point is that when we make a request of God, a "no" answer is really not "no" at all. It means God has something even better than we had in mind when we asked. He gives us a temporary "no" to save us from the tragedy of missing out on His infinitely greater "yes!"

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Because God loves each of us as much as Lazarus, Martha or Mary, He gives us the very best thing His power and wisdom can devise.

Since Jesus abounds with grace more powerful than the surging tides, He gives us His best in spite of the fact that we never deserve it in ourselves, and we have asked for something so far less to boot.

This truth applies to every one of us.

APPLICATION:

What "no" answer from God are you struggling with right now?

Are you seeing the "no" as the beginning of a much greater "yes" that he is giving you?

How can you reorient your disappointment into a hopeful expectation of greater things to come?