

Remnant Life Church

October 8, 2017

John

The Seventh Sign: The Raising of Lazarus

John 11:1-44

- First sign – turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12)
- The second – clearing the temple (John 2:13-25)
- The third – the healing of the official's son (John 4:43-54)
- The fourth – the healing of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15)
- The fifth – feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-15)
- The sixth – the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-12)

READ – John 11:1-44

From long ago many have doubted the historicity or historical validity of this story

- There are those who deny that supernatural events like this in the Bible ever took place
- Others claim that the time involved down through the years casts doubt on its truth
- Still others will say that John 11 is a historical creation or rendering of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16

There is physical evidence that continues to support the biblical accounts

- Ossuary (bone depository) was discovered in 1873 near the town of Bethany inscribed with the names of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
- Does not conclusively prove it was the three from John 11 but it does demonstrate that the names were common and in that region

The town of Bethany

- Lies on the east side of the Mount of Olives
- Less than 2 miles from Jerusalem
- About a 30-minute walk along the road to Jericho (keep this in mind)

The first verse that we must closely examine is the 4th where Jesus responds to the news of Lazarus' sickness

- Jesus is not saying that sickness is never fatal
- But He then says to His disciples words very similar to what He said to them in 9:3 about the purpose of the man born blind
- The death of Lazarus, like the blind man, was going to be for God's glory to be revealed

Jesus must continue to explain in detail to His disciples what is going on

- Verse 8 – they still have a fear of man even with Jesus there with them
- Verse 12 – they confuse sleep with death
- Verse 14 – “So He told them plainly...”

We should not be too hard on them here - the raising of someone from the dead occurs only 3 times in the Gospels (apart from Jesus' resurrection)

1. The raising of Jairus's daughter – **Mark 5:22-24**
 2. The raising of the widow's son – **Luke 7:11-15**
 3. The raising of Lazarus – **John 11:1-4**
- The first 2 were somewhat quiet, subdued, and private
 - The raising of Lazarus was very public and spectacular

This event is important for many reasons but there are 3 that should be noted

- First, this **11th chapter** acts as a bridge connecting the first 10 chapters with the second 10 (21 total chapters in the book)
 - First 10 – Jesus ministry in connection with John the Baptist
 - Second 10 – John's account of the Passion leading to the resurrection and the appearances of Jesus
- Second, this miracle punctuates the person of Jesus Christ, His true identity, and the power of God over sickness and even death
 - Preparing the reader for the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - Eternal victory over death
- Third it is the final event that focuses on the escalating conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders
 - What was their response to all of this?
 - **John 11:49-50** - *Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*
 - **John 12:9-11** - *Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.*

But go back to when Jesus arrives in Bethany He does what He always does – shows the people love

- He comforts Mary and Martha (**11:23,31**)
- He assures them that Lazarus will live again – even though they do not understand what He means (**11:23-24**)
- He weeps with everyone there (**11:35**)
 - An incredible picture that is lost in the uniqueness of the verse itself
 - It is a profound joining of the full humanity of Jesus (weeping) at the threshold of the greatest display of His divinity (raising Lazarus)

Though it might not seem like it, Jesus' timing is perfect

- John has been dead for 4 days
- One more day then the time when the Jews believed a dead person's spirit left their body
 - This comes from the ancient rabbinic belief of the spirit hovering over the dead body for 3 days waiting to re-enter it
 - When it sees the appearance of the body change (the onset of decomposition) it departs

- They then believed that at this point death was irreversible

Watch what Jesus does

- First, he challenges the people's faith – roll away the stone (11:39)
- Second, He joins – through prayer – with His Heavenly Father (11:41-42)
- Third, He calls Lazarus by name to come out (11:43)
 - Why did He call him by name?
 - Who else was in the tomb?
 - Would every other dead body have been resurrected in that moment had Jesus not called out to that one man?

There is more to this story than the raising of one man from the dead (as if that were not enough)

- It is the power of God on full display over the final obstacle of every man's life both in the natural and the spiritual
- It is a demonstration of the depth of Jesus' love for, not just His friend, but for all of God's creation
- It is the 7th and final sign of John that Jesus is the Messiah, the one and only Son of God

What about today?

- Very simple...is there anything in your life right now that is too much for God to handle?
- *"I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? (Jer 32:27)*