



Jesus Has Power Over Death

4

Key Theme

- God has authority over His creation.

Key Passages

- John 11; Ephesians 2:1–5

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe the purpose for which Lazarus got sick and died.
- Describe how sinners go from death to life.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, “Have you ever been raised from the dead?”
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God’s Word

Jesus wasn’t there when Lazarus died. He knew He would glorify God by raising Lazarus from the dead. But His disciples didn’t understand until Jesus called Lazarus from the grave. Jesus is God and can bring the dead to life. He can also give eternal life to those who are dead in sin.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Spiritual Resurrection

Students will examine several passages about spiritual birth and draw parallels to the raising of Lazarus.

- Print one Spiritual Resurrection Answer Key from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.
- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above with this background.

Jesus came to do the will of the Father and to glorify Him. He had power over nature—walking on a raging sea (Matthew 14:25–30). He had power over disease (John 9:6–7). He could forgive sins (Mark 2:5). His miracles showed that He was God in the flesh, the Creator, the Messiah, and the Son of God.

Jesus also confirmed who He was by raising the dead—something only the one true living God could do. The Bible refers to several such occurrences. Let's focus on one: the raising of Lazarus from the dead in John 11. Jesus found out by a messenger that His friend Lazarus, who was in Bethany near Jerusalem, was sick. Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary (John 11:5). And Jesus had already shown that He could heal the sick. So the announcement that Lazarus was sick was probably accompanied by a request that Jesus heal him. What was Jesus's response to this news? His first reaction was to assure His disciples that Lazarus's sickness would not end in death. In fact, Jesus knew Lazarus's sickness would result in the glory of God—that the Son of God [Jesus] would be glorified through it (John 11:4). This is the same purpose Jesus gave for healing the blind man recorded in John 9 (John 9:3).

But another purpose for this miracle is revealed by Jesus when He stated clearly that the miracle He was soon to perform would strengthen the disciples' faith in Him (John 11:14–15). And so, Jesus made His way to Bethany. Once there and amidst mourning family and friends, He took control of the situation. For the glory of God His Father and so the people would believe God sent Him, He called for dead Lazarus to come forth from His grave (John 11:40–43).

As we reflect on Jesus's raising of Lazarus from the dead, it is good to consider the resurrection from death—in the spiritual sense—that all believers experience when we hear Jesus calling us to follow Him (Matthew 4:19). The analogy is made for us in Ephesians. Paul said that Jesus made us alive who were once dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Paul went on to say that because of our sin nature we were all children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). We have rebelled against the holy Creator God and are deserving of His eternal punishment (Romans 1:18–20).

But it doesn't end there, just as it didn't end in death for Jesus's friend Lazarus. No, Paul told us that God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for us, can make us alive together with Christ. God can make a sinner alive in Christ even though he is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:4–5). God does this through the free gift of grace through faith in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8).

This journey from spiritual death to eternal life is available to all who will humbly accept the truth of the gospel, to all who will turn in repentance toward God and in faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

We read in the account of the death of Lazarus that Jesus wept. It seems a logical question to ask ourselves, why did Jesus weep? What was it that saddened the Savior? What can we learn from Christ's sorrow?

Jesus delayed visiting Lazarus when he was sick, knowing that Lazarus would die. Though He could have healed Lazarus (even from a distance), He told His disciples that He was glad He was not there. Jesus anticipated the sign He would perform for His disciples, that they might believe (John 11:11–15).

But when Jesus arrived in Bethany and saw the family and friends of Lazarus grieving, why did Jesus weep (John 11:33–35)? He certainly knew that Lazarus would soon be alive again—it was for this purpose that He had come to Bethany. A closer look at the Greek words behind this scene help us understand the emotions of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus.

John 11:33 says that "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Coming to the scene of Lazarus's tomb, Jesus intensely groaned in His spirit. The Greek word used here literally means "to snort like a horse," implying anger and indignation. It means that Jesus wasn't so much sad at the scene surrounding the tomb of Lazarus, as He was angry. Jesus was angry and troubled at the ravages of the great enemy of man: death. Death is an intruder, and Jesus won't settle for this domination of death much longer. John Calvin wrote about this passage:

Christ does not come to the sepulchre as an idle spectator, but like a wrestler preparing

for the contest. Therefore no wonder that He groans again, for the violent tyranny of death which He had to overcome stands before His eyes. (John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, BibliLife, 2009, p.442.)

In addition, Jesus was affected by the grief of His close friend Mary and the rest of the Jews who were lamenting with her and Martha. When we read that we are to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15), we can clearly see that our Lord and Savior demonstrated that kind of empathy here. However, in contrast to the loud wailing of the mourners, the Greek word used for Jesus's weeping conveys a quiet bursting into tears. Jesus's tears were caused both by His love for Lazarus and by His grief over the deadly and unremitting effects of sin in a fallen world. Verse 35, though the shortest verse in the Bible, is rich with meaning. It emphasizes Jesus's humanity; He was truly "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

Although the passage does not tell us specifically why Jesus wept, we can infer one reason from the context: Jesus was grieved over death as the result of mankind's sin. At the beginning of creation, "the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Genesis 2:16–17). Because Adam directly disobeyed this command, God punished all humanity beginning with Adam: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

The Apostle Paul confirmed the correlation between sin and death: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Paul also clearly wrote that "the wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23.

As Christians, we often forget that death is an enemy. While it is true that when a fellow believer dies we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13), we, nevertheless, must remember that death is unnatural. It is not what God created, but came about because of Adam's sin and rebellion. Let us remember and find hope in Paul's description of a time to come when death will be no more:

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. . . . So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. (1 Corinthians 15:25–26, 15:54–56)

In raising Lazarus, Jesus showed a small glimpse of this ultimate defeat of death. Jesus had the power to raise the dead, and soon thereafter, He went to the Cross to defeat death. Death has been abolished (2 Timothy 1:10), and one day it will be destroyed forever (Revelation 20:14).

This account of Jesus weeping at the graveside of Lazarus is most likely another example of God's grief over sin and its consequence—death. Jesus knew some would not believe. He knew that the Pharisees would now plot even harder to kill Him. He knew that everyone there (including Lazarus again) would physically die as a result of Adam's sin and their own sin. Although He was headed to Calvary to die as the sacrifice for our sin, He still knew that the consequences would continue until the time He presents "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, what a mystery—that you are God! That you raised Lazarus from death back to life. That the miracles you performed on earth were to glorify your Father in heaven. And that you can bring people who are born dead in their sin back to life through the gospel. Lord, I pray for the students in my class, that as we read and study your Word, you will bring their dead hearts to life through the truth of your Word. Stir in them a desire to seek you and to obey you—and bring them to salvation and the hope of eternal life with you.

Review

We have been looking at the power demonstrated by Jesus during His earthly ministry. We looked first at His power over nature and then His power over disease.

? What have we learned about Jesus after examining His power over nature and disease? *As the Creator, Jesus has authority over the creation, even to heal diseases. All of this is affirmation that Jesus is God.*

The power of God was manifested through the works Jesus did during His ministry.

These works were a strong affirmation of the message Jesus was preaching—forgiveness of sins through repentance and belief. And it was belief in Jesus Himself as the Savior that these miracles affirmed that He was indeed God in the flesh.

Today we are going to continue looking at the power of God working in Jesus as He exercised power over the greatest intruder in the world—death.



► Write on the board, “Have you ever been raised from the dead?”

John 11:1–27



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

We are going to be reading through John 11 in our lesson today, but we are going to divide it into two sections. Our first section involves Jesus hearing about the sickness of His friend, Lazarus, and the second about the miracle He performed. Let’s read John 11:1–27 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who are the three friends of Jesus named in this passage? *Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.*
- ? How are they related? *They are brother and sisters.*
- ? Why did the sisters send a message to Jesus? *Lazarus was sick, and they wanted Jesus to come, presumably to heal him.*
- ? How did the messengers identify Lazarus? *They used the phrase “he whom You love” to identify Lazarus.*
- ? How did Jesus describe the sickness of Lazarus and its purpose? *He said it is not unto death, but its purpose is to glorify the Father and the Son.*
- ? What apparent conflict is in verses 5 and 6? *Jesus loves Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, but He waits two more days before they begin travelling to Bethany.*

- ? **How did the disciples respond when Jesus told them they were leaving for Judea?** *They reminded Jesus that the Jewish leaders were looking to kill Him (10:31), questioning the wisdom of returning there.*
- ? **What does Jesus’s response indicate about Jesus’s trust of the Father in completing His work?** *Jesus trusted that He would be safe until His work was complete. He had repeatedly referred to Himself as the Light of the world, so the mention of light and dark in the response was an indication of His death. Jesus knew that His mission would be accomplished.*
- ? **What did Jesus mean when He said that Lazarus “sleeps,” and He would “wake him up”?** *While the disciples thought He was speaking of sleeping through a sickness and that he would get better, Jesus was speaking of His death and resurrection.*
- ? **How did Jesus clear up their misunderstanding?** *He plainly told them that Lazarus was dead.*
- ? **What purpose for raising Lazarus did Jesus identify in verse 15?** *Jesus intended to use the miracle so that the disciples may believe.*
- ? **How long did the travel to Bethany take?** *Since they stayed two days and Lazarus has been dead four days when they arrived, the travel took at least two days.*
- ? **Who was present in Bethany?** *Many people had joined Mary and Martha in mourning for their brother.*
- ? **Where was Bethany located?** *It was about two miles from Jerusalem.*
- ? **What is the significance of Lazarus being dead for four days?** *Being four days in the grave makes it very clear to everyone that he was dead, and it was not a natural revival from a sickness.*
- ? **As Martha approached Jesus, what two things did she acknowledge about Jesus?** *He could have healed Lazarus had He been present and that God would give Him whatever He asked for.*
- ? **What does this tell us about Martha’s faith in Jesus?** *She had a strong faith in Him.*
- ? **How did Martha misunderstand Jesus when He said Lazarus “will rise again”?** *She thought He was talking about the last day when all will rise at the resurrection. This idea of a final resurrection is expressed throughout the Old Testament, and is expressed very clearly in Daniel 12:2, though the sect of the Sadducees rejected it.*
- ? **How did Jesus identify Himself to Martha?** *He is the resurrection and the life, the source of life for all who believe in Him.*
- ? **What did Martha’s response to Jesus’s question about belief reaffirm about her?** *She was solid in her belief and understanding that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God who had come to save the world.*
- ? **What do we learn about all those who believe in Jesus as Martha did?** *They will die, but they will have eternal life.*

➤ “Sleep” is a euphemism for death that is used often in the New Testament. We have similar phrases like “pushing up daisies” to speak of death in a way that softens its dire meaning.

Daniel 12:2

Discover the Truth

As we have seen very clearly in the last several lessons, Jesus did everything in perfect obedience to the Father. That obedience was a way to reflect the

glory of God, and the power demonstrated through Jesus was to glorify God. But as Jesus clearly stated in this passage, the glory was not only for the Father but also for the Son. Jesus intended to raise Lazarus from the dead to glorify God—both God the Father and God the Son.

The disciples thought that Jesus was going to heal Lazarus or that his sleep would make him well. Martha thought Jesus was talking about raising Lazarus in the last day. But both were wrong, so Jesus corrected their misunderstandings in a way that demonstrated His compassion for those that He loved.

SOVEREIGN

FAITHFUL

OMNIPOTENT

- ? What attributes of God was Martha believing in when she trusted that Jesus could heal and resurrect her brother? *Sovereignty in having control over the sickness and death; Faithful in that this was a promise Jesus had made and would surely fulfill; Omnipotent in that He had the power over sickness and death. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*

This event took place only a few days before the Triumphal Entry and a little more than a week before Jesus would demonstrate His power over death by His own Resurrection. Here we have a foreshadowing of the glory that would be revealed in that most spectacular Resurrection of the Son of God.



READ THE WORD

John 11:28–57

Let's read on and examine the details of John 11:28–57 as Jesus performs the miracle for all to see. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What familiar statement did Mary make to Jesus? *She repeated what Martha had said about Jesus being able to heal her brother had He been present earlier.*
- ? What response did Jesus have to seeing Mary and the Jews with her weeping? *He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.*
- ? How do we understand this phrase in light of what was happening? *Jesus intensely groaned in His spirit. The Greek word used here literally means "to snort like a horse," implying anger and indignation. It means that Jesus wasn't so much sad at the scene surrounding the tomb of Lazarus, as He was angry. Jesus was angry and troubled at the ravages of the great enemy of man: death. Death is an intruder, and Jesus wouldn't settle for this domination of death much longer.*
- ? What does the weeping of Jesus tell us about His character? *He was moved with compassion for those around Him who were mourning and coping with the effects of sin. He was weeping with those who were weeping (Romans 12:15) and demonstrating His humanity. He truly loved those around Him and was moved to tears.*

- ? **What did the Jews who were mourning with Martha and Mary wonder about Jesus?** *They wondered why this man who had done so many miracles could not have kept Lazarus from dying.*
- ? **As Jesus approached the tomb, what emotion was still present?** *He was still groaning inside.*
- ? **What concern did Martha express when Jesus commanded the stone to be removed?** *She was concerned about the stench of decomposition that would be present since the body had been in the tomb four days.*
- ? **What did Jesus restate about the purpose of the miracle He was about to perform?** *He reminded Martha that the glory of God would be displayed.*
- ? **After the stone was rolled away, whom did Jesus address?** *He began praying to His Father out loud.*
- ? **Why did He pray out loud?** *He wanted all of those hearing Him to know that He was speaking to God the Father so that when the miracle happened they would believe it was by the power of God and accept Jesus for who He is—the Son of God.*
- ? **What happened when Jesus called Lazarus to come forth?** *Lazarus emerged from the tomb wrapped in his grave clothes.*
- ? **What two responses to the miracle are recorded?** *Many of the Jews believed in Him, but some did not believe and went to tell the Pharisees what had happened.*
- ? **What did the leaders plan to do with Jesus?** *They plotted to kill Him.*
- ? **Why did they want Him dead?** *They were afraid that they would lose their positions of authority if the people began following Jesus and that the Romans would take away their positions of power if Jesus started any social unrest.*
- ? **What do these two different responses indicate about the power of miracles to lead to belief?** *While some believed because of the miracle, others did not. This is clear evidence that seeing miracles will not necessarily cause people to believe in Jesus as Savior.*
- ? **What does John 12:9–10 tell us about how the leaders viewed Lazarus?** *They saw him as a threat, as well, since he was living proof of the power of Jesus, and many were following Jesus because of this miracle.*

John 12:9–10

Discover the Truth

For those who were present, Jesus had clearly identified Himself as the Son of God and then performed the most dramatic miracle so far—raising a man who all knew had been dead for four days. There was no doubt that Jesus was the Son of God and that He had power over death, but that doesn't mean that everyone believed in Him. For many, they believed in Jesus as a result of this display of power in the name of the Father. But rather than offering Him the glory He was due, some sought to kill Him and even remove the evidence of the miracle by killing Lazarus.

Can you imagine the wickedness of their hearts? That is the wickedness that is in every human heart as a result of the corrupting effects of sin

from the time of the Fall. It might not manifest itself in such outward hostility, but it is still there as each of us desires to control our own lives rather than yield control to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus had obviously trusted the good news that Jesus proclaimed to them, and they believed that He had been sent by the Father to save sinners and offer them eternal life. They looked forward to the hope of the resurrection and eternal life. They had been freed from the eternal death that all have earned as the wages of sin. On top of that, Lazarus had become an object lesson and living proof of the power of God through the Son. Jesus demonstrated His absolute power over death in raising Lazarus, and He would demonstrate that power again in a few short days after this event.



Spiritual Resurrection

MATERIALS

- Spiritual Resurrection Answer Key
- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

The students will be drawing parallels between the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead and the new life given to sinners who repent and believe in Jesus. There are different understandings within the church regarding the extent of the depravity of man and his abilities to respond to God. Regardless of where your church stands on this point, there are several parallels that can be drawn between the new life given to Lazarus and the new life given to those who believe in Christ for forgiveness of their sins.

We have talked many times about the corruption that entered the world when Adam sinned. Romans 5:12 tells us that it was this act that brought the death of all men into the world. Not only was physical death a penalty of sin but so was spiritual death. As we think about the raising of Lazarus from the dead, there are many parallels that we can draw. All of us come into the world spiritually dead in our sins. We know this as the doctrine of original sin.

Your task is to use the verses that you will find in the Spiritual Resurrection activity in your Student Guide to draw some of those parallels, then we will discuss what you have found in a few minutes. *Have the students work in small groups to complete the activity. If time is short, focus on the Ephesians 2 passage and have the students complete the other passages on their own.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's talk about what you concluded from each of these passages. *Use the Spiritual Resurrection Answer Key to review the passages.*

- ? Who would like to share the summary statement you developed comparing the resurrection of Lazarus to spiritual birth? *Allow students to share their statements and any relationship to their own salvation.*

As we think about the condition that we were in when God called us to Himself, it should cause our hearts to soar in worship to our glorious Savior. We were dead in trespasses and sins, and He has made us alive, conveying us from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His Son.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Everything that we have looked at today reminds us of the deity of Jesus—Jesus is God. Nobody who was present at the raising of Lazarus could logically deny that fact, but there were still some who did not believe. They remained dead in their sinful condition not willing to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God who came to save mankind from the darkness of sin. Because of the hardness of their hearts, they would not look to the only one who could revive them for their spiritual deadness and offer them eternal life. They clung to their own power, not realizing that it would cost them their souls.

But there were some who did believe. We know that the disciples, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were all looking to Jesus as the Son of God and knew that He was the source of hope, bringing them from darkness into light as they followed Him and believed in Him. There were still some small misunderstandings, but they were looking to Jesus and believed all that He had told them. They knew He had the power to raise the dead, and they were witnesses to that power when Jesus raised Lazarus . . . even after he had been in the tomb four days. Jesus demonstrated His power over the intruder that entered the world when Adam sinned. Death and darkness had no power over Lazarus when Jesus called to him to come out of the tomb.

But in a spiritual sense, those of us who have been given new birth through the Spirit were once dead in our trespasses and sins just as Lazarus was in the tomb. Just as Lazarus was not able to do any good works to merit his resurrection, there is nothing that we can do to merit or spiritual resurrection. God's love toward us is demonstrated in His mercy and grace, calling us to repent of our sins and turn to Christ in faith. It is because of this spiritual resurrection that we know eternal life and look forward to the last day that Martha knew would bring the physical resurrection of all of those who are in Christ. On that day we will find ourselves in the Consummation and will finally know the perfection where there is no more death but the worship of God in truth forever.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? As we have discussed these passages today, what has been most helpful to you? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? How could you use the account of Lazarus to help someone understand that Jesus was not just a man but God in the flesh? *Jesus demonstrated power*

over death and clearly claimed to be one with the Father. He showed the power over creation that only God can exercise. While He demonstrated His humanity in His love and compassion for those facing death, He raised Lazarus from the dead demonstrating His deity.

? **How does understanding our spiritual condition before we found salvation in Christ help us to offer God the worship He is due?** *As we consider the awful state we were in and the miracle that God worked in us, it should stir us up to praise Him for giving us new life.*

? **After Lazarus had been resurrected, the Jews sought to kill him to get rid of the evidence of Jesus's miracle. In a similar way, how does the world (the enemies of God) seek to quiet or cover up the witness that a Christian has regarding their resurrection from spiritual death? What can we do about it?** *Having been given new life, we should be living our lives in worship and obedience to the God who has saved us. Our good works prepared for us to do should be a light to the world around us; they are meant to glorify God. As we are tempted to do evil in various situations or slandered for our good conduct in Christ, we can offer the truth to those around us, looking to share the good news of the gospel and offer those who do not believe in Christ the hope of new and eternal life. Just as the raising of Lazarus was intended to glorify God, our spiritual resurrection should lead to the same end.*

? **Many people claim that seeing a miracle would surely convince them that God exists. Based on the account we read today, is this a true statement?** *While many people might believe that is the case, the account of Lazarus makes it clear that some still rejected Jesus as the Son of God who had come to redeem them. We must continue to help people recognize their own sinfulness, trusting that the Holy Spirit will bring conviction and that they will receive new birth as they repent and believe in Christ. In fact, that is the miracle we should be looking for—a person dead in trespasses brought to life.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for granting new life to those who were dead in their sins.
- Praise God for His power over death.
- Ask God to bring to life friends and family who are still dead in their sins.