

Gospel of John chapter 11, verses 1 – 45 – The Raising of Lazarus:-

Verses 1 – 6 – Introduction:- The Lord Jesus had a number of places where He was made welcome. For much of His early ministry His ‘headquarters’ was at Capernaum by the sea of Galilee (Mark chapter 2, verse 1) the home of Peter and the other fishermen. Bethany was about 2 miles from Jerusalem and was the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The sisters are mentioned in Luke chapter 10 verses 38 – 42 where Martha is recognised as the busy organiser and Mary as the quieter ‘introvert’.

Their brother Lazarus is taken ill and notice is sent to the Lord Jesus, who was probably still on the other side of the Jordan away from trouble in Jerusalem (see chapter 10). The Lord Jesus, receiving the news, deliberately stayed where He was knowing that Lazarus was already dead and knowing the miracle that would take place – “*so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.*” (verse 4). This last and greatest miracle is regarded by John as a fore-runner of the Resurrection.

Verses 7 – 16:- Reason for return to Judea:- The disciples are concerned that the Lord Jesus is going back to where there is fierce opposition and death threats. (chapter 10, verses 31 and 39). Thomas voices this in verse 16 “*let us also go that we may die with Him*”. Jesus makes it very clear that Lazarus is dead and that the delay was deliberate so that His disciples will believe in Him when he wakes Lazarus from his ‘sleep’.

Verses 17 – 27 - Jesus and Martha:- Note that Martha, the more active of the two sisters, is the one that goes to meet the Lord Jesus. It must have taken Jesus two days on the journey. (“*he stayed two days longer in the place where he was*” verse 6. Lazarus “*has been dead four days*” verse 39). This would mean that Lazarus was most likely already dead when the message got to Jesus. Notice that there was already a belief in the resurrection at the Last Day. (verse 24). When the Lord Jesus promises more, Martha responds with a statement of faith. “*I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.*”

Verses 28 – 37 - Jesus and Mary:- Mary had remained at home with friends and neighbours come to support her. Those with her followed Mary as she left the house and so were present and witnesses of all that followed. Jesus himself was deeply affected by the misery of the mourners. “*deeply moved in spirit and troubled*” is literally “*angry*”! Angry at the outworking of sin in God’s world? Angry at the result of the Fall and loss of ‘Eden’? Angry at the apparent victory of sickness and death in humanity? So “*Jesus wept.*”.

Verses 38 – 44 - The Raising:- The sight of the tomb rekindles the anger in the Lord Jesus. Martha is shown as a realist! It is still the custom in hot countries to have the funeral as soon as possible after death. Usually on the same day. Again Jesus gives the reassurance that the Lord God is in control and will reveal His Glory. Jesus knows that all that He does is in accordance with the will of the Father. He prays aloud so that those around will recognise His authority as the One sent by the Father into the world.

The dead hear His voice and Lazarus comes out of the tomb still wrapped in the grave clothes. The final command of the Lord Jesus is to those who put on the binding, they are given the responsibility for the final freeing of the body. The grave-clothes were put in place by human hands and were to be removed by human hands.

Verse 45 – Conclusion:- Many believed in Him! These believers would be in the crowd that greeted Him on Palm Sunday. Where were they on Good Friday?

Having seen what the Lord can do, how firm is our faith?