

Lazarus

John 11:1-3 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

Mary and Martha present a problem to Jesus

- They point out that Lazarus is sick
- They point out that Lazarus is loved by Jesus
- They only present the problem; they do not specifically ask Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. They felt they did not need to, that it was enough to simply tell Jesus what the problem was.

Jesus responds

- **John 11:4-6** When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.
- Jesus delays. Not just a little bit, but 2 days in a crisis situation.

Why does Jesus delay?

- The disciples wondered if it was out of fear
- **John 11:7-8** Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"
- **But if we look at 3 key verses, Jesus Himself tells us why He delayed:**
 - **John 11:4** When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, **but for the glory of God**, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

- **John 11:15** And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, **that you may believe**. Nevertheless let us go to him."
- **John 11:42** And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, **that they may believe** that You sent Me."

His delays are the means of bringing glory to the Father and to bringing faith into the hearts of people. Jesus knew that He was in this world to serve the Father, to bring the Father glory by doing His will. He was not in the world to answer the 'felt needs' of the world. He was not at the 'beck and call' of the world but in the world to do the perfect will of the Father.

Did Jesus' delay cause Lazarus to die?

- No. If you do the math, Jesus was 1 day of travel away from Lazarus. When He arrived, Lazarus was dead for 4 days (**John 11:17** So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.). So Jesus delayed 2 days, traveled 1 day for a total of 3 days, meaning Lazarus was already dead by the time word had gotten to Jesus.
- In fact, when Jesus says "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Lazarus had already died.

Did God cause Lazarus to be sick and die?

- No. Some use verse 4 as evidence that God caused this sickness. But it is more correctly viewed as God using this sickness for His glory, **NOT** causing it for His glory.
- **Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- A careful look at verse 33 shows this death was not from God.
 - **John 11:33** Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

- Groaned and was troubled = Angry and agitated, indignation. Jesus was angry at the enemy.
- It means that Jesus wasn't so much sad at the scene surrounding the tomb of Lazarus. It's more accurate to say that Jesus was angry. Jesus was angry and troubled at the destruction and power of the great enemy of humanity: death. Jesus would soon break the dominating power of death.

So if Lazarus was already dead, why wait 2 days to go?

- The ancients believed the soul leaves the body three days after death, which meant that resurrection was no longer possible. Since Jesus was going to use this as a demonstration of the life of God, He waited until this was a truly remarkable miracle.

Mary & Martha respond to Jesus' delay

- **John 11:20-21** Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."
- Mary was too despondent to meet Jesus
 - Have we ever felt like this when there is a delay in our prayer requests?
 - Later, given space, Mary also confronts Jesus (**John 11:32** Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.")
- Martha confronts Jesus
 - Or do we respond like this?
- The crowd responded - **John 11:37** And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"
 - Do we not sometimes think things like, this is only a breath, or a Word from you. It's so easy for You so why won't You do what I ask?

But I reiterate – Why did Jesus delay? For God to receive glory, that they may believe, that all may believe.

- God is not doing miracles just to satisfy our wants. He has a purpose. And often the purpose involves aspects of answering that we are not comfortable with, like delays, faith, dependence, etc...
- Jesus' delay did not mean He did not care. We already read that Jesus loved Lazarus. In John 11:35 it says that Jesus wept when He saw where Lazarus was laid.

Jesus is about to do a miracle

- **John 11:39-40** Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"
- Earlier Jesus asked Martha if she believed He is who He says He is
 - **John 11:25-27** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."
- Now, when Jesus plans on being who He said He is, Martha's response is Um, but he stinks.
- What about us. Do we really believe who God is and what His promises are? What about when He asks us to do something that seems weird to us – like roll away the gravestone?
- We ask for miracles, but often become a voice of resistance when they come.
- There will always be reasons not to take that step of faith. They will, like these reasons of Martha, be reasonable and sensible as to why you should not do what Jesus has commanded. But there are always precedents for what Jesus commands us to do – In this case hadn't Elijah and Elisha raised two boys from the dead? Hadn't Jesus raised Jairus' daughter and the widow of Nain's son from the dead?

- And even if these had not occurred – hadn't they already stated their belief that God would answer whatever Jesus asked. Now they are called to put their faith into actions.
 - Jesus challenges their unbelief and again states the reason for what is about to happen – that they might see the glory of God.

Finally, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

What do we see from this passage?

1. God's love. Expressed not only in the resurrection, but in the delay.
2. Jesus' compassion and His using what the enemy meant for evil to glorify God and strengthen believers
3. The authority of Jesus over death. God living up to His name. Being who He is.

Will we choose to believe and respond in kind to who Jesus says He is?

Will we believe His promises fully even in the face of delay, and doubters?

Will we believe and accept the Father's unconditional love for us even on our darkest days?