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“Lazarus, Come Forth!”
The Gospel of John Chapter 11:28-46

Miracles in both the Old and New Testaments authenticated the miracle worker (Ex. 4:1-9; Mark 2:1-12). They were not done for show or to attract a crowd so an offering could be collected (Acts 8:9-24). This great miracle, the raising of Lazarus before many witnesses, provided irrefutable proof that Jesus was (and is) indeed the “Resurrection and the Life.” Just as the heat of the sun melts wax yet hardens clay, this miracle by the Son will lead some to faith and others to a hardened disbelief and Christ’s death.

Martha leaves Jesus to inform her sister Mary while Jesus remains outside of Bethany. Mary’s faith, like Martha’s, is weak, but Jesus will increase it (Luke 17:5). The large crowd of mourners that follow Mary, in God’s providential plan, will be the eye witnesses of this miracle. Jesus, showing forth His humanity, is troubled and groans in His spirit. Moved by the sorrow surrounding Him and knowing its’ ultimate source in the evil one, sin and the Fall, Jesus weeps. Likewise, we are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15; Luke 6:21, 7:13, 8:52, 23:28). It is not necessarily our words but our simple presence that provides the comfort that others need in their sorrow.

In a rocky land largely devoid of trees, the Jews often used natural caves or ones hewn out of rocks for burial sites (Gen. 23:9; Matt. 27:60). A stone would be used to seal the surface (Mark 16:1-4). Jesus’ command to roll away the stone despite Martha’s protest further demonstrates that He is the One who conquers death and restores life (1John 3:8). God would receive the glory in this mighty deed (1Cor. 10:31).

Jesus’ prayer to His Father (note: not our Father, Matt.6:9) precedes the miracle. Prayer should align our will with God’s will. Jesus always did the Father’s will. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, this is a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:11-12). The battle to defeat death would require Christ’s own sacrificial death to insure victory. Jesus cries with a loud voice to Lazarus, reminding us of His cries from the cross (Matt. 27:46, 50; Luke 23:46) and His visible and audible return to this earth (Matt. 24:31; Luke 21:25-27; 1Thess. 4:16; 2Pet. 3:10). The grave could not hold Lazarus at Jesus’ words; neither will the grave have power over His body (Ps. 16:8-11; Acts 2: 27, 31). Lazarus is set free, as only the Son can do (John 8:36)!