

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life	1
Scene Summary	1
Scripture	1
Players	2
Special Props	2
Script – Jesus Raises Lazarus to life	3
Supplemental information	6
Reflection questions	6

Scene Summary

Jesus raises Lazarus to life relates the story of Lazarus' sickness, death and how Jesus raised him to life again. Scenes include: Mary and Martha caring for their sick brother...the sisters deciding to send for Jesus...Jesus is teaching people about God...a messenger tells of Lazarus' illness...Jesus delays...then later goes to Bethany with His disciples...Martha meets Jesus and tells Him Lazarus has died....she brings Mary...they go to the cave tomb...the stone is rolled away...Jesus commands Lazarus to come forth.

Scripture

(John 11:1-44 NIV) Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. {2} This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. {3} So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." {4} When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." {5} Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. {6} Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. {7} Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." {8} "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" {9} Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. {10} It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." {11} After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." {12} His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." {13} Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. {14} So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, {15} and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." {16} Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." {17} On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. {18} Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, {19} and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. {20} When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

{21} "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. {22} But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." {23} Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." {24} Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." {25} Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; {26} and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" {27} "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." {28} And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." {29} When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. {30} Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. {31} When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. {32} When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." {33} When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. {34} "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. {35} Jesus wept. {36} Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" {37} But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" {38} Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. {39} "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." {40} Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" {41} So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. {42} I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." {43} When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" {44} The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Lazarus** – An important, non-speaking role.
- **Mary** – Lead character, sister of Martha and Lazarus.
- **Martha** – Lead character, sister of Mary and Lazarus.
- **Messenger** – Sent to tell Jesus about Lazarus.
- **Disciple 1, 2** – Jesus’ disciples, more can be added as needed.
- **Person 1, 2** – Bystanders and mourners at Lazarus’ tomb.
- **Jesus** – God’s One and Only Son.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- Bandages for Lazarus.

Script – Jesus Raises Lazarus to life

Narrator: Lazarus was very ill. He was too sick to eat. The fever made his face feel hot. His sisters, Mary and Martha, took good care of him, but they were worried.

Martha: [sadly] Oh Mary, if only Lazarus could eat something, maybe he would get better.

Mary: [sad] No matter what we do, he only gets worse. If Jesus were here, He would make him well.

Martha: [excited] Lets send for Him!

[scene change to where Jesus was teaching]

Narrator: Jesus was teaching the people when the messenger arrived.

Messenger: [out of breath] I have come a long way, from your friends Mary and Martha in Bethany. Their brother Lazarus is very ill. [excited] They want you to come!

Narrator: The people thought Jesus would go to his friends right away. But Jesus knew that it was not the right time to go. He stayed and taught the people more about God's laws and He healed many of the sick. [pause] Jesus stayed there two more days.

Jesus: Lets go back to Judea.

Disciple 1: But it isn't safe for you to go near Jerusalem now. The Jewish leaders want to kill you.

Jesus: Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.

Disciple 2: Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.

Jesus: Lazarus is dead.

[scene change back to Mary and Martha]

Martha: [hurrying out to meet Jesus] Oh Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Jesus: Your brother will live again Martha. [pause] Whoever believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this Martha?

Martha: Yes Lord. I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus: Go tell Mary that I want to see her.

Narrator: Martha hurried home. Inside the house, she touched Mary's shoulder.

Martha: [quietly] Jesus is on His way here. He is asking for you.

Narrator: Quickly, Mary got up and hurried to the door and ran to find Jesus.

Mary: [falling at Jesus' feet] Oh Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Jesus: Where have you laid him?

[people start walking to show Jesus to the tomb]

Person 1: Look, Jesus is weeping.

Person 2: He must have loved Lazarus very much.

Person 1: Jesus has healed the blind and the sick. Could He have kept this man from dying?

Narrator: They reached the tomb where Lazarus was buried.

Jesus: Men, roll away the stone.

Martha: [shocked] Master, we cannot do that. Lazarus has been dead four days.

Jesus: Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

Narrator: After the men had rolled the stone away, Jesus prayed.

Jesus: Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me. [pause, then in a loud voice] Lazarus, come out!

[everyone looks surprised]

Narrator: As the people looked toward the tomb they saw their friend Lazarus in the doorway, his body wrapped for burial.

Person 1: [excited] Could it be Lazarus?

Person 2: [shocked] It is Lazarus!

Jesus: Unbind him and let him go.

Narrator: Everyone was glad that Lazarus was alive again. His sisters and friends wanted to talk to him. [pause] Many of the people believed in Jesus that day because of what he had done, in raising Lazarus from the dead.

The End

Supplemental information

Funeral customs in Palestine in Lazarus' day were quite different from those practiced in our own country today. As soon as an individual died, the relatives began to cry loudly and continued to wail for a long period. Soon other relatives, friends and neighbors came. All wailed loudly to show their grief.

Some families hired mourners to play sad music on a flute and to wail loudly. Since embalming was not practiced in that time in Palestine, usually the body was buried in the same day the person died.

The body was washed, rubbed with spices or herbs, and then wrapped in special burial clothes. Sometimes the body was dressed in a single cloak, or wrapped in a large sheet like cloth. Other times, the body was wrapped in strips of cloth, and the head and face covered with a separate cloth.

A poor person would probably be buried in a cave. A person who could afford it might have a tomb cut out of rock for them self. The body of the dead person was usually placed on a slab or shelf of stone within the tomb. The opening was covered with a door cut from a large stone. Only the men went with the body to the tomb. The women went to the tomb later.

Reflection questions

- Lazarus was very sick and his two sisters took good care of him. What are the names of his sisters?
- Mary, Martha and Lazarus loved God. One of their best friends was Jesus. He often visited at their house. Why do you think the sisters decided to ask Jesus to come to their home now?
- The women sent a messenger to Jesus. What did the messenger tell Him?
- Because Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, you would think that He would hurry to visit them. Do you think Jesus could have made Lazarus well?
- But Jesus had another plan. Two days later, Lazarus was dead. Jesus decided to go and see the family. The disciples did not want Jesus to go. Not long before, the Jewish leaders had tried to kill Jesus and the disciples thought it was not safe for Him to go. It was a long trip, and the men traveled for two days. Friends must have told Martha that He was in the little town. She ran out to meet Him. What did Martha say to Jesus?
- Jesus had a special message for Martha. What was it?
- After Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would live again, He sent her to get Mary. Many friends were in the house. All were sad because Lazarus was dead. What did Mary say to Jesus when she met Him? What question did Jesus ask Mary?
- Tears came to Jesus' eyes. The people thought He was crying because he loved Lazarus and would miss him. Jesus may have cried because so many of these people did not really believe in Him. When Jesus and the people came to the cave tomb, what did Jesus

as the men to do? Why did Martha tell Jesus they should not roll the stone away from the doorway?

- Jesus reminded Martha that He had told her that if she would really believe in Him, He would use His power to do something so wonderful that all the people would praise God. After the men rolled away the stone, Jesus prayed to His Father, then He called to Lazarus. Do you think Jesus had to pray to God?
- Jesus prayed to God so that all of the people would know that God had sent Him into the world. As soon as Jesus called him, Lazarus stood in the doorway of the tomb. Lazarus was still wrapped in the long strips of cloth. What do you think the people thought when they saw Lazarus?
- How do you think Mary and Martha felt when they saw that Lazarus was alive? The people knew that only God's power could give life to a dead man. Because they saw what God could do, many people believed in Him that day.