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Raising Lazarus:

Jesus' Authority Over Death

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TOPIC:

“Raising Lazarus: Jesus’ Authority Over Death”

John 11:38-44

VERSE DISCOVERY: John 11:38-44 (KJV, Public Domain)

Prepare

- Prepare ahead of time and write the words **“RESURRECTION POWER”** on the top of the board. Leave space in the middle for the following activity. Write at the bottom of the board: **“God’s only begotten _ _ _ , Jesus, can take the _ _ _ _ _ situations and _ _ _ _ _ to life _ _ _ _ _ more.”** (These empty spaces will be filled in later with the words: son, worst, restore, once.)

Say, *Today, before we get into our lesson, let’s see how many words we can find in the next five minutes using just these two words “Resurrection Power”* (this can be done as a class on the board or individually using the **How Many Words** printable found on site).

When the time is up, say, *What are some words we found? Can we use any of the words we found to complete the missing words in this sentence to have it make sense? How about these words: son, worst, restore, once? If we fill the empty blanks with these missing words, we have a beautiful statement of faith before us. One that Jesus not only promised Martha, but to all who believe, when He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).*

In today’s lesson, we are going to meet Martha and Mary her sister and learn about the time they thought it was too late for Jesus to help their brother, Lazarus. But with Jesus, as we will learn, it is never too late.

Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 6-13

Jesus Has Real Power!

Death is never the end of the story for the believer. One day, every believer secured in Christ Jesus will rise out of their graves and join their Lord in the air (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

In our faith, we hold on to that blessed promise and many others like it knowing the truth and the power in the One who will call us to come to His side.

I must ask though, when we hear of that word “power” being attributed to an individual, is Jesus the first person that comes to mind or that we think of? Kids, when they hear of power, they usually visualize a fictitious superhero (if you are instructing children, ask them to name one of their favorites).

While stories of superheroes may be fun to watch and read about, in real life, there is no such thing, and they have no power at all.

But Jesus has real power. Throughout His years of ministry on this earth, Jesus did amazing things when He took the time to heal many people from the many different issues that were troubling them. (You can take this time to ask your class if they can recall any of the miracles Jesus performed: what happened and how did it turn out?).

The Son of God is the real champion and hero of our lives and our souls. His power can do anything. The lesson about Lazarus (John 11:38-44) showed that even after four days of laying in the grave, his situation was not impossible. There was no limit to what Jesus could do to help this man and his family.

But did you know that Jesus’ power can do something far greater than raising a dead man from His grave? Indeed, He can, my friend. He can erase sin from the life of those who believe on Him and repent (Acts 2:38).

In case you didn’t know, sin stinks, and it stains us in the eyes of God (What are some things that you can think of that stink really bad or leave stains on things? I am using a skunk and a permanent marker for my illustration.).

One odor that is extremely difficult to remove from something is the smell of skunk spray (show a picture of a skunk). These animals are super cute, but extremely stinky. When they get frightened, they will lift their tails, and spray whatever it is, be it a person or another animal (you can demonstrate this using a spray bottle with water, spraying it away from others). When someone has been sprayed by them – pee-yew! – you know they have been sprayed.

Eventually though, the smell, as offensive as it is, can be removed by several different means.

The same is true with a permanent marker. Although it says permanent on it, there are several ways to remove the stain of its mark.

But nothing – ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! – can take away the smell and the stain of sin in our lives except through Jesus Christ, who took it all to the cross with Him. There, He paid for all our wrongs so that we might be raised to life again spiritually and gave us a miracle we could have never experienced anywhere else but in Him. Now, that’s real power!

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” John 5:24-25

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Activities

- From the lesson of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44), we are reminded of many wonderful truths, such as Jesus’ love and compassion for people (Jesus wept), activating our faith through believing His promises and acting upon them (rolling away the stone), squashing doubts about what Jesus can do (“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (v. 40)), to believing for the impossible, and God hears our prayers. These, and many more truths come alive in this story. Which part or parts are the most encouraging to you, and why? Write your response on the **Adult Journal Page**. On the **Kid’s Journal Page**, younger students can write about their favorite part of the story and why.
- Younger students can draw a picture of Lazarus coming out of the grave using the **Draw the Scene** page found on site.
- Alternate activity sheets are available on site for those who want to work with printed materials such as **Wordsearch, How Many Words, and more**.

Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth,” (John 11:43-44a)***. There is also a **Memory Verse** worksheet found on site.
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 14)

Life

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead reminds us that with Jesus, it is never too late; with God, nothing is impossible.

Write one verse that reminds you of this great truth on a small piece of paper or an index card. If challenging situations arise, look to that verse as a reminder of God’s great assurance.

Below are five suggested verses to help get you started, or you can find ones that speak directly to your heart.

- “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Isaiah 41:10
- “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” Jeremiah 32:27
- “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” John 14:1
- “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31
- “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Ephesians 3:20

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“Raising Lazarus: Jesus’ Authority Over Death”

John 11:38-44

VERSE DISCOVERY: John 11:38-44 (KJV, Public Domain)

Have you ever watched a dramatic movie just to get that knot in your throat when the scene turns too intense? You know what’s on the screen is not real, yet unbidden tears begin to form in the corner of your eyes. You wipe and wipe, hoping nobody else sees you crying over a movie, but they just won’t stop flowing.

Quite possibly, you have seen this movie before and you know the story will turn out for good, but your heart was just so touched by what was before you that you cannot help but let the emotions of the scene get to you.

In today’s lesson, we come upon a scene that takes a dramatic turn and puts a knot in the throat of our Savior. This does not only become a scene where He shows His undying compassion for those He loves by the shedding of His own tears, but He also shows His complete authority and victory over death and the grave before He ever went to the cross.

JESUS COMES TO THE GRAVE

John 11:38 “Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.”

Jesus was out of the area when He received the summons that something terrible had happened to a very good friend of His. Lazarus was sick and the situation did not look good. His sisters Mary and Martha sent a messenger to the Lord, saying, “He whom thou lovest is sick,” (John 11:3).

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The first response when one hears news of a dire emergency occurring with a family member or a friend is to hurry and get to where that individual is, to offer any support and aid that one can to help remedy the situation. This may be the reason his sisters sent for Jesus in the first place. As we learn, things did not work out as they had planned, but the situation was not out of the control of God. His plan would be made manifest, and glory would be rendered to Him at the outcome of it all.

When He received the news about Lazarus, Jesus spoke without wavering, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby," (John 11:4). Therefore, the Bible tells us He waited and did not immediately run to his side.

Some may think this is heartless. Not so, and if you read carefully, you will see that Jesus loved these people greatly (see John 11:5). God was on the verge of transitioning the faith of those who would witness this great miracle to a brand-new level of belief in Jesus Christ, His Son. Lazarus' death would be the tool that would do just that. So powerful was the event that is about to take place that later "the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus," (John 12:10-11).

So, Jesus waits two more days before He made His way to where Lazarus was (see John 11:6). When He arrives, no surprise to Him, but just for narrative purposes we are told in the Bible that Lazarus has been in the grave "four days already," (John 11:17).

Martha, upon finding out of the Lord's arrival ran to Him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," (John 11:21). She knew that while Lazarus was still alive if Jesus had intervened death, all of this could have been avoided, and they would not be having this conversation today.

With no great, flowery words we often hear as sentiments of condolences at the passing of a loved one, Jesus simply stated, "Thy brother shall rise again," (John 11:23). Martha knew of the resurrection, and she had that kind of faith in Jesus for the "last day" (see John 11:24), but today she still stands in grief wondering why Jesus hadn't come on time.

When Mary was called to join them, she expressed the same sorrowful sentiment, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died," (John 11:32). Seeing His friends weeping and this

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whole sad scene playing out before Him, it caused Him to “groan in the spirit,” and He was “troubled” (John 11:33). His own tears began to flow.

Looking at Him, and seeing His love for the one who was dead, people began to question, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died,” (John 11:37)? At this point, many of them still saw Jesus as just a “man.” And as a man, they were looking at what Jesus could’ve done while Lazarus was alive as opposed to what He can do now even in his death. In their humanity, they focused on what could have been prevented, instead of Jesus as the Savior who has the power to overcome it.

Arriving at the text of our lesson, verse 38 tells us, “**Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.**” Here, Jesus is at the graveside of Lazarus and despite His all-knowing nature, He still groans again.

The fact of the matter is Lazarus was a friend of His and this tragic event touched Him on a personal level. Could it be that although He is fully God, that even in His humanity here on earth grief hit hard? He was surrounded by weeping friends, and one is laying lifeless in the grave. He was going to gain victory over it all, but for now, He groaned.

The Bible says that Jesus was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” (Hebrews 4:15). What that means is He knows what this human life is all about, the good times and the sad. He feels what we feel. He understands the hardships we face in the flesh; therefore, He groans.

Once I wrote, “Isn’t it nice to know that not only do we NOT carry our burdens alone, but we have a Savior that knows what those burdens feel like? Out of the depths of sorrow and pain – He knows. Through the roads of striving and the paths of hatred – He knows. During the darkness of nights, He already knows. Our weaknesses have become His; He knows them, has lived through them, and has borne them. Jesus knows!” ([Jesus Knows](http://JesusKnows.com)/Wordforlifesays.com).

JESUS SAYS TAKE THE STONE FROM THE GRAVE

John 11:39 “Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.”

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“Take ye away the stone.” The scene was heart-wrenching and troubling; now Jesus asked what may seem to be an unthinkable and irrational request to some.

Unthinkable? Maybe for another, but not for Jesus.

Irrational? Not at all. Jesus was asking permission to gain access to the problem.

There are steps of faith and participation Jesus asks His followers to take. If you will remember back in 2 Chronicles 20:17 the people were told to get battle ready and go out against their enemy even though they would not need to fight in that battle. We have the responsibility to activate our faith in Him by following through on His requests even if it seems irrational.

By removing the stone, they would not only be giving Jesus access to Lazarus, but they were giving Him access to their faith. When one opens their faith, they give Jesus a chance to speak life into it and do the impossible.

“Lord, by this time he stinketh.” Martha spoke up at the thought of it all. One did not just go around opening the graves of dead people except to add more dead people to it. Little did she know Jesus wanted to free him that was dead and deliver him from that situation.

It should not be surprising that Martha is the one that spoke up. She was the worrier of the family. When Mary spent time at the feet of Jesus, taking in the words He spoke and strengthening her faith, Martha was busy worrying about the things of this life (see Luke 10:38-42).

“For he hath been dead four days.” Four days gives us the impression that decay could have possibly started to set in in Lazarus’ body. For the human eye, this may look like a point of no return. But for Jesus, it’s not too late.

Jesus’ power and authority over death are not restricted because Lazarus is in the grave and in a possibly decomposing state (think of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37). Lazarus’s sister wanted to confine the possibility of Jesus being able to do something about his condition within a certain time frame. Once that time expired, to her, all hope expired with it.

Earlier she and her sister both expressed to Jesus, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,” (John 11:21, 32). But now, she sees the situation as past the point of remedy. She believes it is too late.

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There is nothing that God cannot do: “For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone,” (Psalm 86:10). Jesus can “do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,” (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus didn’t need her to rehearse how many days have passed. For Him, it’s never too late!

John 11:40 “Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”

Before this moment of questioning, there was given a promise. Jesus assured her then, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26).

Her response then was, “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world,” (John 11:27). She was most likely concerned with the hereafter when she made her declaration of faith. But Jesus was ready right now to do the impossible. He was ready now to manifest **“the glory of God.”**

How do we see the glory of God manifested in our own life? By believing.

In an article titled, [“Do More Than Pray – Believe!”](#) I wrote:

“Sometimes in life, I think we tend to downplay the importance of our faith and what we believe. We hear about it so much that I think as Christians we have become desensitized to its power in both our spiritual and our natural lives. This is not what it should be since we are told in four verses of the Bible, “The just shall live by his faith,” (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38, KJV).

Our faith, our belief should be the marker for everything in our lives. Not just for salvation, but for every action and prayer. We know all the right words to say and all the proper “Christian” motions to make, but is our faith alive and put into full force action?” (Wordforlifesays.com)

What Jesus was asking her was to believe beyond what she can see now, and she will have access to witnessing something truly miraculous taking place. She was to put her faith “into full force action.” As Christians, we too are called to put our faith on display and let Jesus have access to the dead things so that He can raise them to life again.

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Previously in John 11:4, when first called to come to Lazarus' aid, Jesus spoke, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Knowing the power He would soon exhibit, He stated confidently again in verse 11, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

God's glory was about to shine for the whole world to see.

THE GRAVE IS OPENED AND JESUS PRAYS

John 11:41-42 "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

With the stone rolled away from the grave, "**Jesus lifted up his eyes.**" What a beautiful picture this depicts, the King of all creation standing humbly with the naysayers while His whole focus is on heaven. He intercedes and approaches heaven where His Father sits attentively upon His holy throne. A privilege, mind you, that He has now given to all His children (Hebrews 4:16).

"And said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." To me, this is one of the most special phrases in the Bible. Aloud, Jesus let us know that our prayers do not fall on deaf ears. Repeatedly we are taught that God hears when we pray, and here in this moment, Jesus gives us an exact illustration of the faith we too can have when approaching the throne of grace.

"God has so many wonderful characteristics and attributes, but one of the things that always strike me as impressive is the fact that He hears my prayers, Psalm 54:2. In all lowliness of mind and heart, we come before Him freely. The Sovereign of the universe becomes attentive to us, and to our needs, and bows down His ear to take on our concerns and needs. He doesn't have to, but He is mindful of us, Psalm 8:4. He centers Himself to focus wholly and completely on us." ([Know that God Hears](http://Wordforlifesays.com)/Wordforlifesays.com).

That's amazing!

When Jesus approached God in prayer, He went in expectation, totally sure **"that thou hearest me always."**

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When one prays, [expect](#) to receive an answer, expect to see some sort of fulfillment come from your prayers. Look for something to happen because of your praying. Even if the answer doesn't look the way you imagine it should, your prayers do not fall on deaf ears. Be confident that God hears you. God is attentive to you. God does not leave you in a state of wanting. David said, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want," (Psalm 23:1). There will be results.

Believe in the goodness of God. Believe in your relationship with Him as a child of the heavenly Father. Believe that He always seeks to give you His best (ex. John 3:16). I often refer to God in my personal prayer as the Good Father who gives good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). It's something we must hold on to and depend upon. Believe that God knows how to answer our prayers.

"That they may believe that thou hast sent me." Jesus wanted to show the people through His prayer, and through what was to follow, that He and His Father were hooked up together in this. He wasn't some rogue man seeking to attract crowds for self-sake. He was the Son of God, working with God and His approval, seeking to convince as many as possible to believe in Him, to believe in the mission He came to accomplish on this earth, with the end result of saving their souls, not just raising Lazarus from the dead. He spoke, **"That they may believe."**

JESUS CALLS LAZARUS OUT OF THE GRAVE

John 11:43-44 "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Jesus, before He ever went to the cross, proved His authority over death once again. On previous occasions, others who tasted death were brought back to life (see Matthew 9:25 and Luke 7:15). Lazarus's death, and the miracle of life being restored to him would be far more convincing of the power of Christ because he had been dead for a longer period.

Jesus once spoke, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come

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forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation,” (John 5:25, 28-29).

What Jesus was doing with Lazarus now was just a small example of His power and what He will do in that day to come. Therefore, He called Lazarus by name and commanded him, “**Come forth.**” The Bible then tells us, “**And he that was dead came forth.**”

Even in death, those who were and are in Christ Jesus, are secured. “**Loose him, and let him go,**” Jesus commanded. The one who has been raised need not be bound any longer. Graveclothes are for the dead, of which Lazarus was not anymore. Therefore, they were commanded to be taken off him. Lazarus was made totally free.

In conclusion, we can have faith, because we see:

Jesus showed His authority over death before the cross: as seen here in this lesson and through other death-raising miracles.

He showed His authority over death during His process of going to the cross: When Pilate spoke of his power to crucify Him, the Bible says, “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, *except it were given thee from above,*” (John 19:11, emphasis mine). Previously, when He spoke of His life to others He said, “No man taketh it from me, but *I lay it down of myself.* I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,” (John 10:18, emphasis mine).

He showed His authority over death on the cross: “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, *he said, It is finished:* and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost,” (John 19:30, emphasis mine; see also Matthew 27:50 and Luke 23:46).

He showed His authority over death when He rose on the third day: “And that he was buried, and that *he rose again* the third day according to the scriptures,” (1 Corinthians 15:4, emphasis mine).

And He has authority over death forevermore: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and *have the keys of hell and of death,*” – Revelation 1:18, emphasis mine).

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“Raising Lazarus: Jesus’ Authority Over Death”

John 11:38-44

Please Answer the Review Questions Below

1. **T or F.** Jesus expressed relief when He arrived at the grave of Lazarus. (John 11:38)
2. “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest _____, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (John 11:40)
A. Care B. Pray C. Believe D. None
3. Why was Martha concerned that it had been four days since Lazarus died? (John 11:39)

4. Why was it important for Jesus to pray to the Father aloud? (John 11:41-44)

5. The grave of Lazarus was referred to as a _____. (John 11:38)
A. Stone B. Cave C. Tomb D. None
6. **T or F.** Before He ever went to the cross, Jesus proved He had authority over death. (John 11:43-44)
7. When Lazarus came out of the grave, Jesus gave the command to “**Loose him, and let him go**” (John 11:44), freeing him to enjoy life once more. How does this encourage your faith?

