

## A Bible Study on Lazarus

### Lazarus is Raised from the Dead by Jesus

“Lazarus, come forth.” With those words Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is, arguably, the preeminent public miracle of Jesus' earthly ministry. So, note these key facts about that event which are noted in the 11th and 12th chapter of the fourth gospel:

- The miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead was done in front of witnesses. The Jews who were mourning the death of Lazarus saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead and some of them went and reported that miracle to the Pharisees – “...**he [Jesus] cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth... Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done**” (11:43-46)
- The raising of Lazarus helped to provoke the killing of Jesus, because after learning of that miracle the chief priests and Pharisees decided to join forces in a conspiracy that focused every day on bringing about the death of Jesus – “**Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council ...Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him [Jesus] to death**” (11:47 & 53)
- When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead it caused such a stir that the chief priests even decided to kill Lazarus also – “**Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he [Jesus] was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death**” (12:9-10)
- After Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was a powerful witness for Jesus – “**Because that by reason of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus**” (12:11)
- The miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead was a key reason that the crowd met Jesus when he rode into Jerusalem at the event commonly called the triumphal entry – “**For this cause the people also met him [Jesus], for that they heard that he had done this miracle**” (12:18)

These passages and others make it clear that the raising of Lazarus from the dead was a profound event in the life of Jesus. But, since Jesus' raising of Lazarus was such a prominent and highly visible event in Jesus' ministry, what could account for the fact that this remarkable and noteworthy miracle is totally missing from three of the four gospels? The first three gospels do not offer even a hint that this miracle occurred, and they also never mention that Jesus had a friend named Lazarus that he loved. Only the fourth gospel tells us about Lazarus of Bethany.

### Don't Mention It

Certainly, the first three gospels failure to mention Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead cannot be written off as simply a glaring oversight on the part of the writers. So, what can account for the fact that a public spectacle of such extraordinary significance is not even mentioned in the first three gospels? Those who seek to undermine the credibility of the Bible have sought to use the omission of the raising of Lazarus from the dead in the first three gospels to argue that the account in the fourth gospel of Jesus' raising of Lazarus cannot be true. They argue that if this actually occurred and Jesus had raised Lazarus, then there is no way that all of the other gospels would have omitted this astounding event. This omission, they claim, proves that the fourth gospel cannot be true – because they conclude the absence of any reference in the first three gospels to Lazarus coming back from the dead is proof this miracle never happened.

However, assuming that the Bible is in error simply because one is not able to resolve this apparent dilemma is a fool's choice. Can people safely assume that if *they* cannot readily figure out an answer to a question, puzzle, or riddle, then no answer is possible? Of course not. Yet this is the underlying mistaken assumption that so often leads people astray in problem solving in general and in the study of Bible issues in particular. No doubt pride is a factor when people are reluctant to admit or even consider that an answer might exist that they are unable to see. But whatever the cause, assuming the answers to a given question are limited to only those which seem to be obvious is an assumption sure to lead astray.

In the case of those seeking to use the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead as an occasion to discredit the fourth gospel (by arguing that the other gospel writers omission of this miracle means it must not have occurred), they fail to consider that the other three gospel writers could have had a purpose for omitting any mention of Lazarus and this miracle in their writings. But this would not serve to undermine the credibility of the Bible, so those looking for a way to prove the Bible is in error will rush to claim that this omission is proof of biblical error. Still the fact remains that the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is not found in three of the four gospels and this glaring omission begs the question, *Why?*

Given the significance of Jesus' raising of Lazarus and the aftershocks of that event, the writers of the first three gospels must have had a good reason for leaving any mention Lazarus and that miracle out of their accounts of the life of Jesus. The question is: Does the Bible have information that can help to explain why what may be the most profound public miracle of Jesus' ministry is absent from three of the four gospels? The answer to this mystery is related to a similar omission that the first three gospels also make.

### **Missing Persons?**

Strangely enough, it turns out that there is another figure who is equally prominent in the life of Jesus who is also nowhere to be found in the first three gospels. Is this simply a coincidence? Two of the most significant people in the life and ministry of Jesus are found in the fourth gospel and **only the fourth gospel**. None of first three gospels directly mentions either of them, even though they both are important figures in Jesus' life and even though leaving them out of the text could appear to be a momentous oversight. Nevertheless, the fact remains that both figures are treated similarly by the writers of the first three gospels.

Like Lazarus, the unique associate of Jesus who is anonymously identified as the one whom "Jesus loved" appears only in the fourth gospel – neither Lazarus of Bethany nor this unnamed disciple is explicitly mentioned in the first three gospels. Surprisingly, the first three gospels even omit the unnamed "other disciple, whom Jesus loved" when they are reporting events where the fourth gospel tells us this "other disciple" was present (examples of this will be presented in the brief Bible study to come). Is there biblical evidence that can provide a possible answer as to why Lazarus and the one whom "Jesus loved" both appear as substantial figures in the life of Jesus in the fourth gospel, but neither of them is mentioned in the first three gospels? Yes, there is, and the following study, which relies on nothing but the Bible, will demonstrate this.

The omission of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead was not an oversight by the writers of the first three gospels, nor does this omission suggest that this miracle did not occur as some Bible critics have tried to assert. The miracle of the raising of Lazarus was known to the other three gospel writers. Thus, their omission of this event was not an accident; it was intentional.

*Lazarus Come Forth* is a free printable Bible study that quotes only scripture and presents the biblical evidence showing: (A) why the one "whom Jesus loved" and Jesus' "friend" Lazarus are both notably absent from three of the four gospels, and (B) why these two key Bible figures, who appear only in the fourth gospel, **never** appear in scripture at the same time.