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AT LAST Charting
Our Course
for Eternity
WITH MIKE TUCKER

The Ultimate Reunion



Review

It typically isn't anybody's favorite subject but we all think about it. We wonder about it, we fear it, we dread it, we are mystified by it, or may even be fascinated by it. However, few people claim to actually understand death.

We wonder why we die. We wonder what happens to us when we die. Death has been the riddle that no one could answer. That is, no one could answer until Jesus came along and caused death itself to die.

In the previous lesson we talked about Simon having a party to honor both Jesus and Lazarus. Lazarus was an honored guest at the party since not long before, Simon had most likely attended Lazarus' funeral! We find the story in the New Testament book of John.

Digging Deeper

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were two of Jesus' closest friends. While Jesus was away, Lazarus grew deathly ill. The sisters sent word to Jesus expecting that He would drop everything to rush to Lazarus' side and heal him. His response to the news of Lazarus' illness was somewhat surprising.

Faith
for Today

John 11:4-7 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." Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

Later, Jesus announced that it was time to go to Judea to assist Lazarus.

John 11:11-15 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." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

How did Jesus describe Lazarus' condition? (v. 11) Lazarus has fallen asleep.

Lazarus was dead but Jesus used the word, "dead" reluctantly. Jesus spoke of death as "sleep." We find other examples of this throughout Scripture.

When Jesus arrived, Martha met Him and even scolded Jesus a bit for not coming earlier. Their conversation is quite informative.

John 11:23, 24 *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

Martha believed that she would see Lazarus, not when she died and joined him in heaven, but on the day of resurrection, which she said would happen "at the last day." Jesus did not correct Martha since He accepted that her understanding would be correct if He was not going to resurrect Lazarus.

Look how Jesus responded.

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

What value does the resurrection hold if when we die we go to heaven?

Jesus called Lazarus and Lazarus came waddling out of the grave. Notice that there is no record of Lazarus telling stories of heaven. If he had been there four days, he certainly would have much to say on the subject. He might even be a little upset over having to return to earth since heaven is a much nicer place than earth. But we hear none of this from Lazarus, for Lazarus had not gone to heaven, but had slept in the grave.

Jesus holds the keys to death! He views death simply as a period of "sleep" that will be interrupted by the resurrection. Sleep suggests that those who die are not conscious of their surrounding in death. We find this idea elsewhere in Scripture.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 *For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.*

What do the dead know? They don't know anything.

We find a similar sentiment expressed in Psalm 146.

Psalm 146:4 *When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.*

The Apostle Paul describes death as sleep and connects it to the resurrection.

1Thessalonians 4:13-18 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

When will Jesus awaken those who have fallen asleep?

At "the coming of the Lord", or what we call the Second Coming.

That day will be a day of glad reunion, as those we love are called from their dusty graves by the One who has loved them all along. All those who died trusting in Jesus will arise at the Second Coming to life everlasting with Jesus.

We have no need to fear death's sleep. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He holds the keys to death and the grave, and one day soon He will defeat death forever, with resurrection and life everlasting.

For all that accept Jesus into their hearts they can die knowing that they will live again!

