

## **Miracles of Jesus 12-12-02a**

This is Sunday, the 2nd of December, 2012. We're in our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this morning we will be doing a review and summary of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

And then we'll be looking at the withering of the fig tree. And that will leave us with only two miracles remaining, perhaps three. But probably two, which is Malchus' ear.

You would be amazed. You will be amazed at how much... I don't know if I can cover the healing of Malchus' ear in two sessions or not. And then, finally, the second miraculous draft of fish.

When I was young, I thought it was the drought of fish, because it's got that A-U-G-H-T. But then I realized, well, laugh is L-A-U-G-H, so D-R-A-U-G-H-T is draft, not drought or draught. So it's the miraculous draft of fish.

That'll be our last one. And we'll be back to that magic number, that wonderful biblical number that we know so much about, 153. The number of fish that Peter pulls ashore.

And believe it or not, as much as we've talked about that number, I have discovered even some more things about it. But today, we have Lazarus' summary and then the withered fig tree. Let's begin our study, as we always do, by dedicating it to the Lord and asking His blessing on us.

Father, we're so thankful for the opportunity to spend this time together in fellowship and encouragement, receiving the ministry benefits that come from the functions of all of the gifts that You have distributed in our midst. We are encouraged. We are brought into a comfort and a circle of love and appreciation.

Spending this time with those who love and appreciate You and the Lord Jesus and Your Word is a wonderful blessing for us. We thank You for this portion of Your Word and the truth that it contains. We ask that as we look at it together, that each one of us will see in it those truths that God the Holy Spirit can use to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus, to purify and cleanse us, to rebuke and correct and instruct us, and to prepare us for every good work.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Well, if we begin in John chapter 11, I sort of ran myself out of time and there are a few things by way of summary that I want to point out about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This is a very important passage for us in a couple of different ways.

First of all, as we saw last time, the issue is faith. The issue is the matter of belief. We saw this in the preceding context and it is highlighted by the emotional expressions of the Lord Jesus.

We see Jesus groan and we see Jesus weep. And this is somewhat unusual. He's usually pretty sphinx-like.

He's somewhat cryptic. He doesn't express a lot of emotions. Once in a while, cleansing of the temple.

By the way, in some miracle lists, the cleansing of the temple is listed as a miracle. I had not thought it was, but it could be that one man driving everyone out took a supernatural expression. I think the Lord Jesus was just so personally impressive that I'm not sure any divine enablement beyond his righteous indignation was necessary.

But I think no one had ever thought of doing it. I think the shock value was probably enough to drive them out. But here the Lord Jesus expresses this emotion.

And I ask myself why. First verse you learn as a child, John 11.35, Jesus wept. Go to summer camp.

What's the shortest verse in the Bible? John 11.30. It's actually not in Greek, but it is in English. And Jesus wept. And we say, well, Jesus wept.

Okay, so Jesus shed a few tears. And we don't think too much about it. On this occasion where he is about to do one of his most spectacular miracles, and he knows he's going to.

He told the disciples, we're going to go wake Lazarus up. He knew he was going to do it. There's no sorrow for Lazarus involved.

Lazarus is about to get a jump start like he's never seen before. So why does Jesus weep? Well, we saw the pieces of this in the conversation between the Lord Jesus and Martha. Back in verse 21, Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you. Now, Martha knows, and pay attention now, because this is what I did not say last week. Martha knows and says, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

She sent a messenger to Jesus before Lazarus died, and he did not come. And so this is something of a rebuke. Lord, I warned you in plenty of time that he was at death's door, and if you had been here, he would not have died.

Well, there's two errors in this. First, it's, I mean, maybe she knew the Lord well enough. I don't know the Lord well enough to say, Lord, if you had done it according to my timetable, it would have been a lot better.

And that's essentially what she says. If you had followed my timing, if you had bent yourself to my will and come when I told you to come, this wouldn't have happened. And

there's just a little bit, I mean, she's, even now, you may be able to clean this up.

You know, you can still salvage the thing, even though you didn't do it my way. There's a little bit of cheekiness that I think it would be useful for us to observe and avoid. Secondly, Jesus purposely did not come.

And to second-guess the Lord's wisdom in his timing is an error. She sent a messenger, Jesus knew Lazarus was dying, Jesus did not come, and he had a reason. She doesn't really take that into account.

She doesn't even ask, Lord, when I sent the messenger, why did you not come? She says, let me tell you how this would have played out. It's a statement, it's not a question. My encouragement and my ambition in my own prayers is to try to only make declarative statements to God that I'm getting right out of his word.

Lord, you have said, Lord, I am claiming your promise that if I ask, if I seek, if I knock, if I endure, Lord, I'm asking you for wisdom, patience, strength, because you have promised those things to me. I try, and I think we should all try not to say, Lord, if you had just done this, that would not have happened. But even now, Lord, if you'll do this, maybe it'll come out okay.

I think this is an example of something to avoid. This is like Balaam whacking the donkey one more time. I know if I just hit him hard enough, I can get down this road.

I prefer to learn from the mistakes of others, and if I'm going to mess up, I want it to be a new, creative kind of mistake that nobody's ever seen before. And the Lord says, hey, angels, look at this. I've never seen that kind of a goof.

I don't want to just repeat the same things that other people have done. Let's be fresh, be innovative in our errors. But what's very interesting to me is what Jesus says, your brother will rise again.

And as is so often the case when we look at a piece of Scripture, we look at something that God says, well, so how do I apply that? Is it for now or is it for later? I know God's going to ultimately sanctify, God's going to bless, God's going to reward. I know the eternal future's going to be great. How much of this can I take for now? Is this the right situation in which I can claim this promise? Your brother will rise again.

This is a promise. And it's not new to her. And if you've read any of the more liberal or secular commentaries on the Old Testament, they often say, well, you know, this whole notion of resurrection isn't even found in the Old Testament.

This is an innovation that the later writers of the New Testament. This is a Christian thing. I don't know where they get that because look at Martha.

Martha says, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Where did she get this? Did she learn it from Jesus' earlier teaching? She could have, but Jesus would have been teaching out of the Old Testament because you have Ezekiel prophesying to the dry bones, and they stand on their feet. You have Job saying, I know that my redeemer lives, and I will see him at the last day, though the worms destroy my flesh, yet in my flesh I will see God.

Well, that's resurrection. You have the picture of resurrection in the Levitical offerings, in the rituals for the cleansed leper and so on. And there were believers advanced enough who had meditated on the Old Testament scriptures, and they knew prophecy of Daniel.

You know, the day is coming when they will rise, some to a resurrection of righteousness and blessing, and others to a resurrection of something else. But it's Old Testament promise. So she says, well, I know about the far fulfillment.

Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. Another one of the great I am statements of the Lord Jesus. I am the good shepherd.

I am the door. I am the vine. You are the branches.

Here I am the resurrection and the life. Now, this is where it gets really interesting. Back at the beginning of the chapter, Jesus loves Martha and her sister and Lazarus in verse 5. So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was.

Did you see that word at the beginning of verse 6? Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard Lazarus was sick, he did not come. You would think it would be the other.

He loved them, so he made all haste, traveled all night to get there. Because he loves them, he does not come. Now he says, I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? She says, yes, Lord, I believe you're the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

And we talk about that is to come. The conquering king, the messianic kingdom establishing one that John the Baptist asked about from prison. So, here's the thing.

Do you see it? There is this crisis and Jesus does not come. Then he comes. For Martha and Mary and Lazarus, Jesus has come.

He loved them and he did not come. But now, after Lazarus' death, he has come. He is there.

He doesn't say, I will be the resurrection and the life. He says, I am the resurrection and the life. And he's standing there.

The resurrection and the life is standing right in front of you, Martha. He did not come and now he has come. There's great typological foreshadowing significance in this, as you can piece together pretty easily.

But here's an interesting point in terms of personal application. I ask myself, how could Jesus expect Martha and Mary to expect Lazarus to be raised? Plenty of people have died in Israel and weren't raised. Simeon and Anna died.

Jesus didn't, as a child, raise them. His father may by now be dead. He didn't raise him.

At certain times and places, Jesus has raised someone. But she says, well, if you had been here, he would not have died. And even now, I know you can appeal to God.

But why does Jesus weep? Why does he groan? Because they should have known. They should have known that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. And then I think, well, would I have known, standing there? Jesus has come, but he's been dead four days.

Jesus has raised some recently deceased people. There may be some question. Somebody might have said, well, maybe they weren't really dead.

Maybe they were just in a coma and he just kind of rattled their cage and they woke back up. But this four-day thing is incontrovertible. Martha says, I was over there checking the rock, and there's some odor coming out.

I mean, he stinketh. He's way dead. He's cold and dead.

And there's this tradition they had, and it's just a tradition. But in this age, you can read Alfred Edersheim, and he goes into length about the beliefs, the superstitious beliefs of the Jews at this time, that the angel of death came along and had a sword. And there was a drop of gall that would run down this sword and hit the dead person on the fourth day.

And that's when their spirit actually departed. And so if he's been in there four days, even superstition-wise, the drop of gall has fallen, and he's not resuscitatable by any stretch. Not that anybody expected someone to be resuscitated anyway, but by any measure.

So why does Jesus sorrow that they don't have more faith? Well, here's why. Because Jesus has come. Now, she sent the messenger when he was sick, and he did not come.

So it is clear that his intention is not to heal him from his disease. Once he is dead, Jesus comes. Why would Jesus come? Did Jesus ever go just to comfort somebody? Just to, well, I just thought I'd put my arm around your shoulder and tell you it'll all be okay.

Martha already knows that in the last day, all of the saints are going to raise. Jesus doesn't need to show up to remind her of that. She knows it.

She says it. This is, I think, why Jesus weeps, why he groans when people are weeping and moaning. He has been here three solid years teaching.

This is the advanced class. These are the best students. This is Peter, James, John, Martha, Mary.

These are the ones that get it. Look how much Martha knows. And yet, this is a challenge for application.

Should be able to put together. Remember the disciples in the boat. The storm is raging.

The presence of Jesus should tell you something. Can the boat sink with Jesus in it? I remember when I was a tiny child, there was a Burl Ives record we had. And Burl Ives sang this song, the only place I've ever heard it.

With Christ in the vessel, I'll smile at the storm. Smile at the storm, smile at the storm. With Christ in the vessel, I'll smile at the storm until he takes me home.

Sailing, sailing home. Nice little song. With Christ in the vessel, I will smile at the storm.

Why? He's there. Make application. This is why we have the book of Revelation.

We're not going to be here for the tribulation. Why do we need chapter 5 through 19? We're not going to be here. Because just as we look in the past and observe, interpret, and apply, we look to the future.

We observe, we interpret, we apply. Jesus, when he comes, will raise everyone. Here he is in Bethany.

He has come. So why did he come? To raise someone. And they should have gotten it.

And they didn't. And the disappointment of the Lord Jesus brings tears to his eyes. Have I been with you so long and you still can't make these? Now, from a human point of view, I could say, but Lord, raising the dead, really, seriously, do you? I mean, it's just outside our experience.

We're just made of mud. We're made of clay. Do you expect us to make this application? And Jesus says, yes, I do.

Because you're not just mud. You are filled with the Spirit. This is for us especially.

We have the Spirit, and we have the Word, and we have got to mix those parts. I was telling Kenny, I've been tiling a shower stall, and they've got this stuff called epoxy grout. It's good for waterproof applications because it's epoxy.

Well, it comes in a bucket, and the sand and the mud part, and then there's this little deal of color and agent. Well, you take the thing apart, you pour one into the other, and

you mix it thoroughly. You've got to mix it thoroughly.

You can't have any part of it that's not mixed, or you'll get streaks and weird stuff, stuff that doesn't cure. So you stir it, and you stir it, and you stir it. The people that have electric deals, but I'm not a pro, so I just use a paint stick, and I stir, and I stir, and I stir until I can't see any streaks.

It's thoroughly mixed. Well, now it's working, and it doesn't matter what happens in the rest of the planet. That stuff is going to set in about 30 minutes.

So whatever thou doest, do quickly. Clean up. If you drop any, like on the tub, hypothetically speaking, you should clean that because when it sets, what's the name of it? Epoxy.

It's epoxy. I've grouted before with grout. You put your sponge in water, you can leave it.

Put your trowel in water, you can leave it overnight. Stuff comes right off because water keeps regular grout from setting. Not so epoxy resin, I have come to discover.

It sets under water. It sets in space. It sets on the sun or on the moon.

That stuff, it's just a time clock. If you want more working time, you've got to try to chill it because it's a chemical reaction. Well, the Word of God and the Spirit of God have to be mixed, and this enables our application above and beyond human expectation.

This is coming up in our next miracle. What is the expectation of the Lord Jesus? We're moving toward the withered fig tree here, and it's the same idea in another form. Jesus expected something from that tree, and he didn't find it.

Jesus expected something from his advanced class here, and he did not get it. And he weeps, and he groans. Have I been with you so long, and you can't make these applications? Yes, it's not human thinking, but you've had the Lord Jesus Christ as your teacher, so can you not get this? You've got the best teaching in the world.

It's not the teacher. It's not the teaching. It's what you do with it.

It's the mixing. It is the digesting. It is the applying.

This is our part. You can mix that grout and mold things out of it, but what you really want to do is get it between your tile. You can stick it all over your floor and your bathtub, but that's not where you want it.

You mix it, and then you put it where it goes, and clean it up where it doesn't go quickly, because it's going to set, and there's only a certain amount of time. Jesus isn't going to be here for decades. This is the end, remember? He's just days away from the cross.

Didn't get it. That's why he weeps. Listen, at the judgment, we do not want the Lord Jesus Christ to look into our eyes and have his eyes moisten up.

I gave you so much. I taught you so much. Could you not wait with me one hour? Could you not make this simplest of steps of faith? Could you not draw a conclusion based on what you were taught and have joy and have peace and have confidence? Martha meets the Lord Jesus, and she says, Lord, you have come.

I know now that my brother will live. That would have been the right answer. That's C of the multiple choice test.

Didn't get it. That's why Jesus weeps. Finally, for us, in terms of personal application, when you look at this, yes, there are many wonderful things that God has promised to us in the future.

But remember, we have the preview of the kingdom now. The things that were promised to Israel, the land promise, the prosperity promises, the peace promises, the abundance promises are foreshadowed in us when we walk by faith. That's why believe, believe, believe is all the way through this passage.

And we say, well, yes, I know I'm supposed to believe. Well, here's how to believe. Here's what to believe.

The promises of God, your brother will rise again. If Martha really was at the top of the class, she would have said, Lord, I'm so excited. Let's go do it.

Let me lead you to the tomb. I can show you where it is. You know, they're not at the tomb when they have this conversation.

They're in that secret meeting place. Great, Lord, I knew when you came it would all be okay. Not if you had been here, it would have been okay.

And it's a failure. And this is one we don't want to miss. We want to be those who walk by faith.

In verse 41, they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. This was handy for Lazarus, because bound up as he was, as I mentioned last time, you know, it's enough for him just to emerge. I don't think he could have worked the stone loose from the inside, wrapped up as he was.

Jesus could have done another miracle. Remember the bandages that bound the Lord Jesus were laying. He evidently came through them.

You know, shroud of Turin, perhaps. But there was nobody there to let Jesus out of his bandages. Well, I suppose the angels that rolled away the stone.

But here the angels did not appear, so they roll away the stone. Jesus lift up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me, and I know that you always hear me, but because of the people who are standing by. Why did Jesus come to Bethany and raise Lazarus? Was it for Lazarus? We saw Jesus rooster tail the disciples' fishing boat across the Sea of Galilee with a storm that scared them to death and that he had to calm down.

Remember that? Just to get to the other side for one guy. It was the man possessed, or the two men, if you listen to Matthew, who likes to include all the nearby guys. But Jesus goes all the way across the lake just for the legion, and then he goes back just for the one guy.

Here it isn't just for the one guy. This is a blessing for Lazarus. They've written gospel songs.

Well, Lazarus, what did you see? Well, I saw all these Old Testament parties. Personally, I don't think he did, but it doesn't say. But it's not for him.

And we think, well, it's the raising of Lazarus. Didn't Lazarus get the best blessing out of this? If I had a choice between coming back for more years, if I've already said and done my piece here, and the Lord has taken me home, absent from the body, face-to-face with the Lord, if he really was face-to-face with the Lord, I can't think of anybody more disappointed than Lazarus at, oh no, come back. But Lord, sorry, got a little thing to do down here.

It isn't for Lazarus, that's the point. It is for the people who are standing by, and Jesus specifically says it in his verbal prayer. I know that you always hear me, but because of the people who are standing by, I speak that they may believe that you sent me.

Now, God sent him, and what is the result of being sent? He has come. He is here. There are promises you can claim because he's here.

Here's the big idea. Here's the point. Has Jesus come for us? You say, well, I know he will come at the rapture.

Don't be Martha. Don't be Martha. Has Jesus come? Yes.

The one who has my word and keeps it, John 14, 15, 16, that wonderful teaching episode in the upper room, the one who has my word and keeps it, he it is who loves me, and I and my Father will do what? Come to him and make our home with him. If Jesus has come, if he is here, what does that mean in terms of application, in terms of expectation, in terms of claiming promise? It means this. It means this.

There is nothing too hard for the Lord if it is in his will, if it is in his time, if it is in his purpose, and these are things that we enter into as we learn the word of God. We will

know his will. If you've got faith as a grain of mustard seed, if you have this sort of sit in the front of the class and learn and get it knowledge, you can say to the mulberry tree, be uprooted and plant it in the sea and it will be done for you.

Jesus is going to make this point. I'm anticipating. One of the reasons I'm doing this review is these same points are reflected in the withered fig tree.

What is the point? We're going to see it. Jesus is going to make a very similar statement to that uproot the mulberry tree thing. He's going to make an almost identical statement in the withered fig tree.

Why? It is all about faith. Walk while you have the light. What did Jesus tell the disciples back in verse 9? Are there not 12 hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world.

When you see the light of the world, what are you looking at? You're looking at the sun that has come. The sun has risen with healing in his wings. Yes, there's wonderful things coming at the rapture, but don't be Martha.

He has come. If we are people of faith, if we mix the promises of God with faith in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is here. He's here.

Don't wait. Don't fall short, and don't get limited by a human view of what would be a good solution. Let God do his work.

Which is more glorious? Jesus coming when Martha calls him and saying, Oh, Lazarus got a fever? Well, rise, man. Oh, thank you, Lord. I feel much better.

Or waiting and raising him from the dead as the final public sign to Israel. This is the last notorious miracle that Jesus does in his ministry. It's the last one that makes a buzz and everybody hears about.

And there's a reason. Because what does it represent? He is the fulfillment of those Old Testament promises that say you're all coming back so that God will fulfill his covenant promises to you. This is Jesus' last broadcast to that generation.

And the symbolism of it, do you know that Lazarus was dead four days? Well, how much Israelite history has there been? 4,000 years. It is time for them to be raised. The resurrection and the life is here.

He has come. Can you claim it? Well, the generation could not. And Jesus weeps for them.

He weeps over Jerusalem because I would have gathered you under my wings. The sun has risen with healing in his wings. Like a hen, I would have gathered you under my wings, but you would have none of me.

Don't be Jerusalem. Don't be Martha. Jesus has come.

There is power to meet any challenge. There is wisdom available in the Word of God to know when and how to claim those promises. And when Jesus is here, it's time to claim the promise.

You're here. My brother is going to be fine. It doesn't matter how much time has passed.

So this really provides context for what we're going to see when we come back from the break as Jesus, following the tragic entry, as I call it, into Jerusalem. He is going to see this lone fig tree and speak to it. That's what we'll see when we come back from the break.