**Lazarus, Come Forth**

*Days before the Crucifixion*

"The Nazarene, Jesus, he is the problem we must deal with." The man with twisted and graying sidelocks, dressed in the black woolen robe trimmed with golden stitching, addressed the religious group. He was in command, and he knew his collaborators. Their directions and paths were entirely under his domination. One by one, he focused his attention, on each Pharisee. "Is he not a plague on our people and an affront to our God?"

"You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish?[[1]](#footnote-2)"

The Sanhedrin was stunned by Caiaphas' blunt statements. Each was aware, in his manner, of the Galilean's offenses. He claimed to be the unique Son of God. In addition, he reportedly used God's own words spoken in the past to Moses.

"I AM WHO I AM.[[2]](#footnote-3)"

This statement was blasphemy. And then the falsehood of Jesus' reported raising of the dead Lazarus in Bethany was outrageous, provocative and offensive. Yes, the distinguished group of Jews knew the carpenter's son's crimes, but the high priest was speaking about this prophet's death.

*Sometime Before*

The food that day must be perfect, Martha decided. Her sister Mary and brother Lazarus would dine with her in Bethany. It was a small dusty town in Israel, situated on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, two miles north of Jerusalem. The two women were busy with the twisted challah bread and tilapia fish seasoned with olive oil and cooking on the open hearth. But it was the arrival of Jesus of Nazareth, that so thrilled the three.

"We must hurry, he will arrive presently," Martha said, as she labored in the warm kitchen. She was hot, with sweat on her forehead. Also, she was anxious, moving quickly, anticipating a delay. The Lord was her guest today.

There was a quiet disturbance in the front room, their visitor arriving. Mary dropped a tray of legumes, Alfalfa, clover, beans, peas, chickpeas, lentils, and lupins spilled onto the stone floor. She seemed not to care as she mindlessly picked up some of the debris. Her goal was to see the Rabbi, not to be stuck with cooking. She wiped her hands on a towel and set the bowl on its rack. She looked at her sister hopefully. Would she signal her to leave, releasing her from her chores? Regardless, she turned and quickly entered the front room, leaving her sister alone.

A group of bearded men gathered, just inside the door. They wore loose-fitting, roughly cut, dark woolen robes, tossed over knee-length tunics, all with thick leather sandals left neatly at the door. The group parted, revealing Jesus.

Mary stood, looking at the man across the room. She was breathing heavily, wringing her hands continually, and wearing a big smile of excitement. Jesus was whispering, holding her brother, Lazarus' hand. He looked up and made eye contact with the woman, his face with a tender smile that seemed only for her. All Mary could do was stand there. She was thrilled, but afraid to interrupt the gathering of the Rabbi and his disciples.

Lazarus led Jesus across the room to a low table surrounded with assorted pillows. He gently guided the man to recline at a place of honor. The brother stood at his side, hoping for an invitation to sit. Jesus signaled his pleasure and helped the loved one, Lazarus, to his side. He put a hand on the brother's shoulder and pulled him to himself in an embrace. The love of Jesus' was a light flooding the room, but a special love was evident for Lazarus.

Mary moved to a simple wooden box sitting on the floor. Within was a pint pottery jar of pure nard, aromatic oil. She quietly moved and sat at the feet of Jesus. "Lord, may I anoint you with fine oils this day?"

Jesus stopped his discussion. He looked to the woman with tenderness. "You bring me preparation for burial, your special gift will be remembered on that imminent day."

Martha stood in the doorway, her arms crossed, aware of the scene. She was hurt, perhaps annoyed, to see her sister with the Lord. She was taking advantage of an opportunity that Martha dearly desired. She whispered, silently to no one.

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me![[3]](#footnote-4)"

Jesus was aware; his penetrating eye contact intensely drawing Martha's attention to him. She dropped her arms and began to cry silent tears. He whispered just for her ears.

"Martha, Martha…you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.[[4]](#footnote-5)"

**#**

The cough began innocently, and he gave it little thought. It was just a tickle but soon became a violent whoop. When he awoke with shaking chills and fever, a rigor, unable to sleep due to the persistent hacking, Lazarus was in trouble.

The illness progressed quickly, from a tepid cold to a full pneumonia. Lazarus resigned himself to bed, propped up and hacking green sputum, congested and aching. Sleep was strained and arduous. The headache felt tortuous, and the chest pain was violent and unrelenting.

The note read-only *SICK*, signed with a single L. Martha conferred with Mary, and the two quickly walked across town to their brother. His abode was cold, dark, musty, with a foul odor only noted in death. When they entered his room, the man was unconscious, hot to touch, his breathing labored and shallow.

"Wake him; he mustn't sleep." Martha was concerned. She set the bowl of broth on the stone floor. Mary opened the curtained window. They lit candles and a fire presently.

"Lazarus wake, my dear. We have broth; you must drink it slowly."

Mary rustled the man, feeling his brow to be sweaty and warm. He opened one eye, closed it quickly in pain, a slit of a smile on his crusted lips. The cough was uncontrollable, productive of phlegm. They wiped his mouth and spooned him a small amount of broth. Martha was distraught, Mary troubled, death starring out in tragedy.

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The rofim of Hebrew doctors stood at the bedside silently, their experience fearing a doomed misfortune for the man. One, in particular, spoke for the learned group. "Your loved one is stony ill with pneumonia and grippe, which stalks among us, seeking weakened constitutions, congestion, and fever."

The rigor began once again. Shaking chills overcame the man, and it seemed that, without restraint, he would fall from the bed. Mary buried her face in Lazarus' chest, lying tightly on him in an attempt to steady her brother. A high pitched, croup-like, whine moaned from his throat. Martha cried, kneeling on the floor.

"See the fever and ague hanging about him. It is best woman, to contain him such as you do." The doctor seemed alarmed, as well.

The group began to treat Lazarus. They applied medicines of borage, cabbage, and pomegranate used on the forehead and chest like a warm poultice. His condition progressed downward in general, though consciousness would come and go, perception was present only momentarily. Rigors continued unabated, with fits and violent coughing attacks. They reluctantly performed bloodletting; pints of tainted blood drained from his lifeless forearm.

Nighttime came to Bethany. The sisters were distraught and discouraged. When Lazarus grew silent with tortured panting, the rohim reluctantly left the room in shame.

"What must we now do, Mary?" Both women were dejected by their brother's condition. Fright covered their faces. He was unarousable, ridden with grippe, and now showing agonal gasping breaths. Veins collapsed; pints of blood let. "The Lord, Martha. Jesus will come and resolve this. He loved our brother. Let's send a missive."

The sisters sent word to Jesus and the apostles.

"Lord, the one you love is sick.[[5]](#footnote-6)"

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.[[6]](#footnote-7)"

Now Jesus delayed his travel to the bedside two days. Puttering about was all he seemed to do. He recalled the message and stored it in his sleeve.

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going to there to wake him up.[[7]](#footnote-8)"

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.[[8]](#footnote-9)"

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.[[9]](#footnote-10)"

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Now Lazarus was entombed already for four days, wrapped in death linens, remaining in a cave secured with a round stone. Mary, ahead of Jesus' arrival, kept vigil. Martha went to meet her Lord.

"Now, many Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. Meeting him, she embraced her Lord softly. Her tense appearance revealing her feelings of anger. Mary stayed home.[[10]](#footnote-11)"

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.[[11]](#footnote-12)"

"Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again.[[12]](#footnote-13)"

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.[[13]](#footnote-14)"

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?[[14]](#footnote-15)"

Jesus stayed just outside of the village, not entering as of yet. Mary went to be with him. Her weeping moved him deeply, and he wept as well.

The Jews saw his love for Lazarus. They, too, were troubled by the death. "Could not a rabbi, who opened a blind man's eyes, kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said.[[15]](#footnote-16)"

Martha was apprehensive and spoke to Jesus. "There is a bad odor after all these four-days, Lord. She seemed hopeful, now with dry eyes.

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?[[16]](#footnote-17)"

Jesus prayed to God in a loud voice. The growing crowd of Jews were full of believers and doubters. Pharisee spies moved throughout.

"Lazarus, come out!!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face.[[17]](#footnote-18)"

*Days before the Crucifixion*

The Sanhedrin rapidly assembled in the center of Jerusalem. Caiaphas as high priest presided over the religious assemblage. "Rabbi, what did we accomplish this day? This Jesus has given the people many signs and wonders. Here now, this ailing subject healed. They believe he raised Lazarus from the grave. The nation will believe the Romans will come and take away the temple and the nation."

Then Caiaphas spoke up with anger and frustration. "Fools, you realize nothing." He reminded the group of his prior statement. "Is it not better that one man die than the whole nation?"

From that day, the Hebrew leaders plotted Jesus' death. The Savior no longer moved publicly among Judea.

Author's Notes:

* 1. All scripture is taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. The title is from the King James Version.
  2. Indented blocks of text signify scriptural passages.
  3. Spoken biblical quotes are closed within quotation marks.
  4. Other quotes indicate the author's dialogue.
  5. Lazarus was dead. He was not only healed of an illness but was brought back from the dead. Consider that Jesus said he was dead. Also, he was in that condition for four days, not a matter of hours. Very importantly, the people buried and embalmed him; something never performed on an ill individual. Lastly, Lazarus smelled of the decaying process, never seen before death. See: *Lazarus, Forensic Pathology of the Bible: https://www.lynesonline.com/post/lazarus-forensic-pathology-of-the-bible*

1. John 11: 50. Holy Bible, New International Version. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Exodus 3:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Luke 10:40. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Luke 10: 41-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. John 11:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. John 11:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. John 11:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. John 11: 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. John 11: 14,15. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. John 11: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. John 11:22 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. John 11: 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. John 11: 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. John 11: 25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. John 11:38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. John 11: 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. John 11: 43-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)