

What happened to Lazarus after Jesus raised him from the dead?

John 11:1-44 gives the account of a man named Lazarus being raised from the dead. Lazarus was a friend of Jesus, along with his sisters, Mary and Martha. He had grown sick, and his sisters sent for Jesus to come to Bethany. Jesus delayed His arrival, and Lazarus died. Jesus did not arrive in Bethany until four days after Lazarus passed away.

Martha was confused and hurt that Jesus had allowed His friend Lazarus to die. But He told her, “Your brother will rise again” (John 11:23). Martha assumed Jesus was referring to the final resurrection of the dead, but He was telling her of something that was going to happen momentarily.

When Jesus went to the place of Lazarus’ tomb, He had men roll away the stone from the opening. Then He shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43). The crowd around the tomb was shocked when the dead man hobbled out of the cave, still bound with burial cloths. Verses 45-46 tell us that many who saw this miracle believed in Jesus, but others reported it to the religious leaders. It was this miracle that sealed Jesus’ fate with the Pharisees and rulers. “From that day on they plotted to take his life” (verse 53).

It was not only the life of Jesus the Jewish leaders conspired to take, but that of Lazarus as well: “The chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus . . . for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him” (John 12:10-11). News travels fast, and many people wanted to see the man who had been raised from the dead. Alarmed, the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel. Most likely, Lazarus was reciting his experience over and over again, which resulted in the desperate decision of the Pharisees: Lazarus must die. Again! In the

darkened minds of the temple leaders, Lazarus, the latest evidence of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, had to go.

After Lazarus was raised from the dead, he returned to the home he shared with Mary and Martha (John 12:1-2). He was present when Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Knowing the miracle Jesus had recently performed, we understand why Lazarus' sister was so overcome with gratitude that she would go to such extravagant lengths. Lazarus may have been his sisters' only provider, and his death could have meant poverty for them both. Jesus had returned to them not only the brother they loved but the protector and provider they needed to survive.

The Bible gives us no further information about Lazarus. Any additional details stem from church history and may or may not be accurate. One tradition holds that, after Jesus' ascension back into heaven, Lazarus and his sisters moved to Cyprus where Lazarus became the bishop of Kition and died of natural causes in AD 63. Another theory claims that Lazarus and his sisters moved to Gaul to preach the gospel, and Lazarus became the bishop of Marseilles, where he was beheaded under the tyranny of Emperor Domitian. Whatever happened to Lazarus is unknown. But we can be certain that his physical body died a second time. And we know that, according to 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17, Lazarus will be raised again from the dead to join all God's saints in eternity.