A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
IIII. Christ's Resurrection Power Displayed
(John 11:17-44)

I. Introduction

A. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the circumstances surrounding that event coupled with the miracle itself displayed beyond any doubt to the onlookers that He was the Resurrection and the Life, John 11:25a.

B. Reviewing this account in its historical and cultural context encourages us regarding our own future existence and resurrection, so we view this John 11:17-44 passage for our insight, application and edification:

II. Christ's Resurrection Power Displayed, John 11:17-44.

A. To show His total power over physical death, Jesus delayed going to Bethany so that Lazarus would die and be entombed for four days so that no Hebrew at Lazarus' resurrection could doubt that a miracle had occurred:
   1. Lazarus had likely died "soon after the messengers left" Bethany so that when they reached Jesus to tell him that Lazarus was ill, Jesus likely knew that Lazarus had been dead for a day. (B. K. C., N. T., p. 313)
   2. Yet, Jesus stayed where he was for two more days before traveling to Bethany (John 11:6), what involved a fourth day for travel, so that when He arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days (John 11:17).
   3. This delay had been carefully planned by the Lord, for the Jews believed that physical corruption began on the fourth day after death so that as the face of the deceased changed, the soul "took its final leave from the resting-place of the body." (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, vol. II, p. 324-325, citing Abhodah Zarah, The Talmudic Tractate on Idolatry, 20) Jesus thus planned for His arrival in Bethany to occur as all hope among Hebrew witnesses for His immediate raising of Lazarus was past!

B. Christ's conversations with Martha and Mary were designed to set them up to have a greater faith in Him once He had raised Lazarus from the dead, John 11:17-42:
   1. When Martha heard that Jesus had finally arrived at Bethany, she went out of her house to meet Him while her more contemplative sister Mary lingered behind in the house, John 11:17-20.
   2. Martha's claim that if Jesus had been there her brother would not have died was an implied critique of Jesus (John 11:21), but she reaffirmed her faith that whatever He asked of God, He would give it, v. 22.
   3. Jesus' reply, "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11:23) unfortunately errs in all the major translations, for the word "again" does not exist there in the Greek text! (Op. cit., B. K. C., N. T., p. 314; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 371-372) Jesus actually said, "Your brother will rise!" setting the stage for an immediate miracle, but Martha had lost hope that Lazarus would rise **then** since he had been dead four days, so she replied that she knew he would rise at the **last day** to enter the Kingdom. (John 11:24 with Daniel 12:13)
   4. The Lord then announced that He Himself embodied (***Ego eime*** [Ibid., p. 372] "I Myself am," the "I AM" of Exodus 3:14) the Resurrection and the Life, that he who believed in Him, though he physically died, would yet live, and whoever was spiritually alive in Him would never spiritually die even if he physically died, John 11:25-26. It was impossible for Martha then to understand all this meaning from these words, but Christ spoke them so that after He raised Lazarus, Martha's faith in Him would grow much greater!
   5. Martha affirmed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God Who was to come into the world as predicted by the prophets, affirming her faith but not hoping for her brother's immediate resurrection, John 11:27.
   6. She then sent word to Mary that Jesus sought for her, so Mary hurried to see Him and fell at His feet, blurting out that if He had been there, her brother would not have died, John 11:28-32.
   7. As Jesus made His way to the tomb, though He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He entered into the grief of Martha, Mary and the many Hebrews who were there so that He Himself wept, John 11:33-38.
   8. Arriving at the tomb, Jesus ordered that the stone be rolled away, what elicited a horrified objection from Martha who said that since it was the fourth day, the stench of the body would be great, John 11:39.
   9. Jesus reaffirmed His claim that if she believed in Him, she would see the glory of God, so they removed the stone, v. 40. Jesus then publicly prayed that the Father might reveal that He had sent Jesus, v. 41-42.

C. In great power, Christ then called out loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" and Lazarus came out of the tomb bound hand and foot with graveclothes, so Jesus told the people to release him and let him go, John 11:43-44 NIV. Someone has said that if Jesus had not named **who** was to come out, **all** the dead would have come out!

Lesson: In raising Lazarus, Jesus revealed Himself to be the Great I AM, the Resurrection and the Life.

Application: May we believe that our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life for our physical and spiritual lives!