

**LAZARUS, COME
FORTH!**



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SECTION 1: ALLEGORY

Events and stories told in the Bible have a literal meaning, or a plain sense intended by the author. For example, in Galatians Paul tells us that Abraham had two sons.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.

(Galatians 4:22)

That's plain in that it states Abraham had two children and they were boys. We see in Genesis that Abraham did have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, so this is a scripture with literal meaning.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

(Genesis 16:16)

And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.

(Genesis 21:2-3)

Besides the literal meaning of scripture, there is oftentimes a deeper, spiritual meaning. This is referred to as an allegory.

An allegory is defined as *a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one* (www.dictionary.com). Britannica states in allegory the Bible *has a second level of reference beyond those persons, things, and events explicitly mentioned in the text* (www.britannica.com).

Basically, beyond the obvious interpretation, there is a deeper revelation about a topic that enriches the scripture. This interpretation is often revealed by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Let's continue with the Galatians scripture about Abraham and his two sons.

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother (Sarah). (Galatians 4:23-26)

Abraham had two sons, one through Hagar (which represents slavery or bondage) and one through Sarah (which represents freedom). There is both a meaning that is easy to see just by reading the scripture, such as Abraham had two sons, and there is also an allegory, or a deeper spiritual interpretation, such as these two sons represent bondage and freedom.

Sometimes, an allegory can be a type or shadow of things to come. In the example of Ishmael and Isaac, the allegory of their births can be a representation of mankind. We are born slaves to sin but then are freed from that bondage when we accept Jesus.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)

Paul is telling the Roman believers that since they accepted Jesus and became saved, they are no longer slaves to sin, but instead are free because of Jesus!

Let's look at another example of an allegory.

Jonah, who tried to disobey God by fleeing from Him, was cast overboard from a ship and was swallowed by a fish.

**And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.
And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and
three nights.
(Jonah 1:17)**

This was a literal event that took place, but it is also allegorically a type and shadow of Jesus being buried for 3 days in the grave before the resurrection.

**For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the
belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three
days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
(Matthew 12:40)**

Now let's take our knowledge of allegory and apply it to the event of Lazarus' death and resurrection described in John 11.

Check on Learning

- 1. In your own words, define what an allegory is.*

- 2. Aside from the examples given in Section 1, describe another allegory in the Bible.*

SECTION 2: LAZARUS' RESURRECTION TELLS THE STORY OF SALVATION

Lazarus being raised from the dead is Jesus' last miracle John records in his gospel, a picture in itself of Jesus ultimately defeating death. Allegorically speaking, the deeper meaning, or revelation, surrounding this event is it shows a picture of what occurs when someone is saved.

Let's discuss the deeper aspects to the events surrounding the resurrection of Lazarus. We'll look at three main points.

Point 1: The Stone

**Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."
(John 11:39)**

The stone was a block between Jesus and the man who needed him. It was a physical barrier. Did you ever wonder why Jesus didn't just obliterate the stone Himself? He could have simply spoken to the stone and it would've crumbled! Instead, he told the people around, the friends of Lazarus, to physically move it.

This is a picture of the issues a person has that is separating them from Jesus. For example, a person who has done drugs all of their life are living in a darkness, like the tomb Lazarus was in, and the drugs are serving as the physical barrier, or stone, separating them from hearing the beckoning of Jesus.

Jesus doesn't just stop the person from doing drugs. He could, simply by His words, but instead Jesus is giving us a picture of our part to play in a person's salvation. *Sometimes we have to come alongside a person and help remove the "stone" that is keeping them from receiving Jesus.*

Their stone can be anything. It could be addiction, anger, confusion or just a lack of knowledge of who Jesus is. It could even be man-made religion that keeps them separated. Whatever it is, the part we play is to share the gospel with the person and that has the power to remove any stone.

Lazarus had been dead for four days, and Martha's concern was that if the stone was moved the smell of death would be strong. In comparison, a person who is a sinner can often be considered too far gone to be saved. *Someone who has lived decades apart from Jesus is never too far gone to receive Jesus into their life!*

Point 2: The Calling

**When he (Jesus) had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."
(John 11:43)**

Once the stone was removed, Jesus called Lazarus, telling him to wake up from the darkness and come out to the light where Jesus was waiting. *An unsaved person is living in the darkness of sin and only one person can call them out of that darkness and into the light of salvation – Jesus!* No one but Jesus can take someone from darkness to light.

Notice that because Lazarus was dead he could not search for Jesus. He could not get out of the current state he was in and come out to the light looking for Jesus. Instead, Jesus met Lazarus where he was at...dead and in darkness.

Jesus meets us the same way, in our darkness and at our worst. That's where the miracle of salvation occurs! Don't let unbelievers think they're not good enough to accept Jesus or that to satisfy Him they need to clean their act up before He'll accept them!

Point 3: Unbind Him

**The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."
(John 11:44)**

The linen didn't automatically just fall away. Jesus could've simply walked over and unwrapped the linen Himself but instead He again turned to those there, the friends of Lazarus, and told them to remove the bandages. Why?

Jesus was giving us another picture of what occurs when someone is saved. The linen represented who Lazarus *was*, a dead man. Now he was alive and didn't need to wear those grave clothes anymore, but he was just raised from death so grave clothes are all he had. It was up to those around Lazarus to take the old things representing death and remove them from him.

Spiritually, when someone first receives salvation they come out of the darkness and into the light but they are still wearing their "grave clothes". Grave clothes defined who they were before Christ called them into light. Those clothes can represent who the person was. A liar, a cheater, a murderer, a slanderer, a whatever. With salvation though, the person is brand new, but they need believers to come alongside them and share truth with them about how the old person is gone. *Every truth that is shared with a new believer is another strip of the grave clothes linen that is removed.*

In Luke, we have another allegory about the prodigal son returning home to his father after living a life of sin and shame. In the story, the father of course represents God, our Father, and the son represents a sinner being welcomed home, or saved, by the Father.

When the son returned, he was filthy, wretched, smelly and unworthy. Spiritually we were the same when we heard Jesus calling us out of our grave! Look at how the Father reacted to His son.

And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and

**is found." And they began to celebrate.
(Luke 15:21-24)**

The Father in this story had those around His son take away the filthy clothes and replace them with brand new ones! The old clothes didn't represent the son anymore!

Check on Learning

- 1. Who removed the stone to the grave of Lazarus' tomb?*
- 2. What does the stone represent?*
- 3. Who called Lazarus forth from the tomb?*
- 4. What does Lazarus emerging from the grave represent in this allegory?*
- 5. What is the significance of removing the grave clothes, and whose responsibility is it to remove them?*

SECTION 3: CONCLUSION

The event of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is an allegory that spiritually describes what happens when a person is saved. It's a beautiful picture of Jesus taking someone out of the state they're in as a sinner in darkness into a beautiful light. It also describes roles to be carried out by other believers: share the gospel, which will remove any barriers to the person receiving it, and removing the lies, or grave clothes, that no longer define the new believer.

It would be easy to read the story of Lazarus and not get the deeper meaning at the spiritual level that is contained in the words. The Bible is full of other scripture with deeper meanings, and I encourage you to not just read the Bible at face value, but instead seek revelation from the Holy Spirit on deeper meanings and truths contained inside. You will not be disappointed!

**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find;
knock, and it will be opened to you.
(Matthew 7:7)**