

Lazarus' Gospel

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Dedicated to those in Revelation 6:9~10:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood?"

1

Rebecca was finishing up her email when Jonathan gave her another comment: "I just don't understand this stuff Rebecca. This dead guy is giving lectures about the afterlife. What arrogance."

Rebecca chuckled, "He wasn't dead when he wrote it. He was brought back to life a couple thousand years ago by Jesus Christ if you believe all that ancient stuff."

They found this book, Lazarus' Gospel, a few weeks earlier. They bought it even though they weren't religious. If anything, work and success was their 'religion' and God had no part in that. Not because they didn't like God. God was simply foreign to them.

"But they got around on camels. How could a dead guy, he is dead now, know about my soul. This is the age of technology with heart pacers, cars, computers, the internet, smart phones, and a lot more. The world is run through digital space and cloud technology. They didn't even have electricity back then. It had to smell like camel dung everywhere they went. And he thought he could rescue my soul from being hijacked by the world!"

Rebecca just looked at him for a minute. "Wow, this 'dead guy' has you all riled up Jonathan."

She paused while a new thought crept through her mind. "Maybe, now that you're finally secure with your software company, just maybe, you should take some time off and look at the opposite side of things. Check out this old ancient way of life," she paused again. "It might even do you some good." She sipped some more of her wine while going back into her email.

"Great idea Rebecca, but I've got to finish a new project. There's a whole lot on my plate. I've got to run updates and monitoring systems on the network. I don't have time for some ancient dead guy."

"Yes Jonathan. I know you're very busy. But there is more to life than just work and computers. What about reading and music for example?"

"We're still going to the dance aren't we," he reminded her. "That's getting away from work. It will be a lot of fun. We can even do some more reminiscing about the good old days."

They had gone to the University YMCA to get their tickets for the upcoming Christmas dance. Their history started at the YMCA during their college days. They decided to visit the YMCA, buy their tickets, and then reminisce: It was their old 'stomping ground' and they wanted to relive some of their past.

They went to the restaurant where they had their first date. They walked around afterwards. It was beautiful during the fall in Cincinnati. The tree leaves seemed to change colors magically. Rebecca loved the deep red ones the best. She was always amazed how beautiful they were. She especially liked the yellow, red and other colors as they mixed together. They also saw that their favorite bookstore, Dutenhoffer's, was going out of business. They went in and browsed around for a while and found a few books. One of the books was an old religious book about somebody in the Bible named Lazarus. They bought it thinking it would look good on their coffee table.

"Of course we're going to the dance," she replied. "I'm going to buy a new dress tomorrow. But if you think that's a way of having 'life' beyond work you're missing the mark a little bit. It will be fun though. Maybe we should go to a park the next day and get some cool air in our lungs. You know, do something simple that can help revitalize our souls."

The screen saver on the computer screen flicked on and her mind returned to the present. "I'll finish email tomorrow," she said. She didn't want to continue with it. Her break from it wasn't long enough. She disliked computers. She thought about the screen saver though. She frowned. It dealt with technology. "You really should take some time off work Jonathan. Give your new project to Anthony and let him do the computer updates." She paused and smiled at him. "Your brain is clogged up in all the technological clouds and the technological gods have possessed you," she joked.

"Things are changing so fast in the world, especially in technology and social networking. I need to stay ahead of it all. The next stage is just around the corner. I can almost grasp it. Technical devices keep getting smaller and more powerful as time goes on."

She sighed deeply. "Maybe you really do need to get away from it for a while." She knew how hard he worked and how focused he was when it came to completing projects. "Some ancient philosophy might do you some good. Getting out of your high tech obsession for a while could even refresh your mind. This 'dead guy' Lazarus would be something different for you. It's totally alien to you and the new knowledge might make you better off. It could be good to figure out what this Lazarus guy is all about. Then, after a break, you can go back to being a computer geek, and probably be better at it too."

He thought again how the Internet had changed the world over the past thirty years. Computers made the world lightning fast now. He was a small part of all of that. Software he created was being used all around the world. He loved his work even though he'd only been at it for a relatively short amount of time. But he was getting tired. It was consuming him. He was getting burnt out from the endless hours of work.

"You're probably right Rebecca. It would be better to get my mind into something different but I'm too busy right now. I'm usually about work. It's all I know."

She stayed silent.

He thought about his obsession and really wanted a break. "But I'll do it." I'll do it for us, he thought.

He knew he neglected her sometimes. And she knew he loved her. But something had been interrupting their relationship. It really wasn't the work and it definitely wasn't another person. There was no blame but it was slowly becoming a fact. They both knew it.

"Maybe we could have a second honeymoon," he said.

She looked at him for a long moment. She didn't know what to say. She thought she didn't attract him anymore. "Unbelievable." She tried to joke. "You're human after all." Her joke wasn't very successful but he smiled to say he understood.

"Why don't you take a month off work and we can read this 'dead guy's' book. We can talk about it a little. And then maybe...." She smiled a genuine smile, "... we can fool around in the evenings."

"A vacation and a second honeymoon," he said cheerfully. "We could travel too."

"That could be a little too distracting," she suggested. "Let's call it your ... your sabbatical and really focus on it."

"But I'm not a professor," he said. He could have taught at the University of Cincinnati but turned down the offer.

"True," she said knowing about the offer. "But a vacation or second honeymoon implies much relaxation. And unlike a vacation, it'd be good to exercise your mind while getting away from work." She looked deep into his eyes. "Actually, you need to get away from work. And like I said, when you get back into it, your mind will be fresh." She paused and then gave him a seductive smile: "Would you like to start your 'sabbatical' now or would you rather work on your software

updates?"

He started moving closer to her but she held up both of her hands: "Stop! Toss your cell phone to me. It belongs to Anthony until you understand what this friend of Jesus, this 'dead guy' Lazarus has to offer the world."

Reluctantly, he gave his cell phone to her. She gladly turned it off. "It will be nice to have you back Jonathan."

2

They woke up late the following morning after a night of furious love making. She smiled at him. "Jonathan," She paused, "it's good to have you back. I didn't think you'd ever become human again after being sucked up into all of your work."

He gave her a wink and looked deep into her eyes. They use to always look deeply into each others' eyes and take what seemed like a journey into the other's soul. He stretched for a minute and reached over to the side table to grab his phone. All he found was the old book they found at the second hand bookstore. "Where's my phone?"

Rebecca smiled. "I don't know. I sent Anthony a text early this morning and asked him to take it. I'm sure he has gotten it out of the mail box by now."

"You put my phone in the mail box where anyone could have grabbed it." He looked worried. "It has a lot of information on it. People steal mail out of mail boxes. My life is on that thing. What if someone else grabbed it? Besides, we haven't discussed when to start this journey we're calling a sabbatical."

"Relax Jonathan. Anthony would have contacted us by now if someone else had gotten it. You and I made a deal last night and there is no backing out of it now. You have to forget about your cell phone, email, and your company for a while. Let's just say a few weeks starting from last night."

He regretted that decision now. "But I've got so much work to do." The look she gave him let him know that a promise was a promise. He was torn but didn't want to back out of their deal now. He unenthusiastically picked up the book, inspected the old worn leather cover, and read the title: Lazarus' Gospel: Revelations from His Life, Death, and Life Again. Jonathan started leafing through it and stopped at a random page. "This is a footnote or something."

'Eternity: What is eternity? One day is like a thousand years to God.[\[1\]](#) Take the first day of one of those one thousand years and it becomes a thousand years. Then take the second day of the first thousand years and add one thousand years to it. Then, go back to the first day, which is now 1,000 years, and take its first, second, third day, and so on, which all become an additional 1,000 years respectively. The second thousand years also has a day one, two, three and they all become 1,000 years too.'

Jonathan stopped reading and started laughing. He laughed so hard and so long that Rebecca started to worry about him as tears rolled down his face. She looked at him in utter amazement.

"Don't you see it?" he asked her after he caught his breath. She just shook her shoulders. "It's an endless pyramid of time. It's an endless loop: An algorithm. The first day becomes a thousand years. Each and every day of that thousand years becomes another thousand years. It's an exponential nightmare. Each and every day continually turns into another thousand years. It never ends. Even a NASA mainframe computer system couldn't figure out how long eternity is. Any computer in the world would simply keep working on it until it lost all of its excess memory; it would eventually crash and become a non-operating machine. Or it would simply keep rolling out those thousands of years for," he chuckled, "for eternity." He looked up at Rebecca and smiled. "IBM would have fired Lazarus' ass before he had had time to be raised from the dead."

"Oh." She had no words. So she picked up the pillow and playfully started hitting him with it. He picked up the other one and a late morning pillow fight started which ended up into a non-competitive affectionate wrestling match which led to another long stretch of love making.

3

Seth went to the next house and knocked on the on the front door: "Hi, my name is Seth and I'm with your local telephone company. I'm following up on the work we did a while back when we dug in your neighborhood..."

Mr. Roth cut him off: "You're not going to dig up my back yard..."

This strategy usually works, Seth thought to himself. "Oh no, you misunderstand Mr.," Seth looked down at his print out of current customers on this road. "I don't see your name. You must be with the cable company."

"Yes," Roth said skeptically.

"I have good news for you Mr.," he paused. "May I have your name?"

"Paul Roth."

"I've got good news for you Mr. Roth. We upgraded your telephone lines during that construction by replacing the old copper wires with fiber optic lines. I can now offer you TV, Internet, and telephone over fiber optics which means you can save a lot of money and get better service."

"I've got a good plan now."

"I'm sure you do Mr. Roth. How many TVs do you have?"

"Three."

"Are you able to record three different shows at the same time and watch a different show at the same time?"

"I could record three shows while watching a different show on one of the TVs...."

“Yes.”

They went on like this for a while and Seth threw in a few hundred dollars worth of cash back coupons as part of the bargain. “You’ll be able to see all the business channels for stock prices during the day and watch some porn in the evenings.” That joked always seemed to work, “and grandma can watch religious shows in the basement. Everyone wins because you’ll be paying less money.”

Seth signed up Mr. Roth and earned almost \$300 in commissions. He thought to himself how it was all about planting seeds: He’ll think he’s going to get rich off the stock market and see some porn when nobody else is at home which could cause domestic problems. He can also send his wife’s mother into the basement to watch some worthless TV religious shows when she visits. She might even get caught up in the trap when the ‘preacher’ asks for money as a test of faith: The more money given is equivalent to the amount of one’s faith. Then all she has to do is wait for god’s reward. According to some TV preachers there could be a 10, 50, 100, or even a 1,000 percent gain. The larger the amount given should result in a higher return. It just takes faith on knowing what amount gives the highest return. A ‘\$1,000 seed’ is a great balance of faith and reward. The greedy TV preacher knows how angry, in this case the mother-in-law, will be at God when the return on that investment is zero: Prosperity Theology at its best. One of the best scams out there. Seth smiled.

He valued his work as a door-to-door salesman. The money was good but he was fascinated how, day after day, he saw the commitment people gave to TV. He was amazed at the manufactured value TV offered. The commercials were obvious. But the unconscious messages the programs provided were ongoing trends. He often compared the differences in movies on TCM to modern TV and movies. People suck up stuff from TV the way a sponge soaks up water, he thought. And he took full advantage of it.

4

Jonathan and Rebecca woke up for the second time that day. Jonathan made it to the kitchen after Rebecca started taking a shower. He got the coffee going and started breakfast. He was hungry and knew that Rebecca would also want to start off as if it were morning: coffee, toast, and eggs. “Perfect timing,” he said as she walked out and sat down at the table with only her robe on. She picked up the remote and turned the radio on. They hadn’t had time in a long while to just sit together without anything to do. “It’s nice not having any pressing issues to deal with,” he said as he went across the room and turned the radio off. “I can’t deal with commercials right now.” She smiled. She forgot how much he hated commercials. She didn’t notice them most of the time.

“But I’ll make it up to you,” he said. They both loved a wide variety of types of music. He put on one of their favorite CDs: A Metallica rock concert with an orchestra. They both appreciated how the classical music intermingled with Metallica’s heavy metal rock music. It was unique. They soon started dancing to the music and searched each others’ eyes once more. They weren’t going to let this time pass because it was good enjoying each other’s company. After a while they ended up taking another long nap together. Their arms and legs shifted from time to time as they held onto each other while comforting and sheltering each other from life’s pains and disappointments.

She gently nudged his shoulder, "don't you think it's time to get up now that it's early evening?"

"Great," he had a half awake smile. "The night person of the house is starting to wake up." He couldn't help but to love her. "Just when I was starting to settle down for the evening and catch up on some long well deserved sleep."

"Oh hush up. The night's young and we really should go out and have a real meal for the day."

"OK. Just let me sleep for twenty more minutes." He closed his eyes again. She grabbed his hands and pulled him up.

"Oh come on.... Wake up." She gently shook him.

He stretched. "I don't have to get up for work in the morning...." And he was hungry. "Where's a good place to eat?" he asked while he rubbed his eyes. He didn't want to think.

"There's a new Japanese restaurant. I saw an ad in the newspaper." She got up and found the newspaper. "It's supposed to be authentic," she said as he got up. "I'm not sure exactly where it is but we can get directions off the internet."

"Sounds good to me."

5

"Turn left here." They had been looking for the restaurant for a while now. "It's got to be around here somewhere." She pauses for a minute. "I think we're a little lost." Jonathan had to stop at a red light. When it turned green he pulled over to the side of the road. "Wouldn't it be better to stop at a gas station for directions," she asked.

"That's not why I stopped." He pointed across the street to a church sign on their left. She looked up and read what he was looking at. "Lazarus: The unbearable pain when the light hit his eyes." They both just looked at it for a minute.

"It's called Northern Hills Presbyterian Church," she said. "Look, they have a late Sunday service at 11:30 in the morning." Jonathan started driving and they found the restaurant soon after that.

The Yakitoriya Restaurant seemed authentic. Someone pounded on a huge drum a couple of times when they walked in and a few waiters and waitresses shouted out something like "Irashai...."

They took a while to look over the menu after they sat down. Jonathan ordered baked fish, some cold noodles, and yakitori. Rebecca was more daring with plain raw fish, as well as sushi, and a few other things. They had trouble using chop sticks so the waitress gave them some instructions: "Hold this one like you're going to write with a pen. Then, hold the other one inside the bottom of

the back of your thumb with the front of the stick resting on your third finger." They fumbled around with them for a while but were finally able to use them.

They always enjoyed doing new things together. They seemed to always bring out the best in each other. Unlike past relationships which seemed to just bring nothing but negativity and discouragement. What is it that enables one person to bring out the good in some and another person just creates a mood of negativity or dread Jonathan thought. It must be something spiritual, he paused with that thought. She is so easy to talk to and so damn good to me.

"What do you think about that church sign?" Rebecca asked not knowing the thoughts she interrupted. "Is it coincidence or could it be some kind of message?"

"I don't know. It might be something like meeting someone you know but haven't seen in years. Then, all of a sudden, you see that person in a crowded store."

"Do you mean we met God, on the side of the road, when we got lost?" Rebecca asks.

"Hell if I know – oh, the pun, if you can call it a pun, was not intended," he responded.

"Maybe we shouldn't cuss anymore," she suggested hesitantly. Then she smiled: "Wow, it looks like I'm getting religious." She laughed at the absurdity of that. She briefly thought of her aunt though.

"The religious Rebecca," he smiled at her. "That'll be the day." The waitress brought over the small flask of sake they ordered. "Who knows, maybe we'll find out about religion a little bit when we go to that church service on Sunday." He filled the little glasses the waitress gave them for their sake. They raised them and said "cheers" for their newfound task. The waitress gently interrupted them and explained how to say 'cheers' in Japanese. So they gave it a try. "Kampai: Here's to the death of some old ancient 'dead guy' who has all the answers," he said skeptically.

"Jonathan, I could have been religious," she said abruptly. "My aunt Dorothy was. She said it wasn't about being religious though. It's about a relationship with God somehow. I seriously thought about it but decided that I couldn't focus on music while being religious. I usually think about that when I visit her grave each year," she paused. "I wonder what she would of thought of Lazarus."

"Would you like me to come along with you this year," he asked. Sometimes she wanted him to go with her.

"We'll see," she said. Sometimes she wanted to talk while at other times she wanted privacy. She thought about how her aunt said that it would be possible to have both. It wasn't an either or situation. Jesus could help guide her with her music as well as her life. In fact, it's a relationship, her aunt said. Many religious people do not know Christ. They just go through the outward motions. Jesus helps with our internal thoughts, feeling and emotions more than the outward motions.

Jonathan and Rebecca talked for a while and eventually asked for their check.

There was a small gift shop in the lobby so they stopped and looked around before leaving. "Oh, this is kind of cute," Rebecca said and she held up small ceramic white cat with a pink paw up by its head. It looked like it was waving. He picked up a small sword: "This would be a neat letter opener. I think I'll get it." They also found a book about Japanese culture. It briefly went over business and technology in Tokyo and gave information about temples in Kyoto and the original capital of Japan

– Nara. “Look Jonathan, it says they have two ancient religions, Buddhism and Shinto. Each kami, or god, in Buddhism has a purpose. They have hundreds, or even thousands, of gods”

“Interesting, we’ll have to see what our friend Lazarus has to say about all of that,” he said jokingly. He bought the sword, ceramic cat, and the book on culture.

6

Sunday morning came quickly. Their experience at the Japanese restaurant triggered a conversation about how each country and region in the world had its own specific culture, religion, political system, and view of life. Japan, for example, was a technological giant with Buddhism and Shinto as the main religions. Other places, like the Middle East, had Mosque and there were Hindu and Buddhist temples in India. It seemed like every country had its own way. And each country had its own regional traits also.

Rebecca thought about their conversation as they entered Northern Hills Presbyterian Church. It was an old church building as most temples in Japan are old, she thought. The Dome of the Rock, the Islamic shrine in Jerusalem, was older than the United States. This church was probably built in the late 1800s. It had an old Gothic style sanctuary with an antique pipe organ in the choir loft. The pipes from the organ took up much of the center of the back wall. The pews were about forty deep and divided into two rows with a center isle. The sanctuary was lit up from the sun pouring through the stain glass windows. They sat about ten rows back. Is Christianity that different from other world religions, she asked herself.

Suddenly a deep rich sound started emitting from the old pipe organ. It was a musical style Rebecca had never noticed before. She immediately fell in love with it. They could hear singing which got louder as the choir came from behind them while moving towards the front of the church. They sang something about “an old rugged cross” until they entered the choir loft up front. There must have been about thirty choir members. She was pleasantly surprised.

“Pretty cool so far,” Jonathan said.

Reverend Thomas Hewitt sat near the pulpit until the choir settled in and finished singing the hymn. He was upbeat as he started speaking and people seemed to like him. He told a few jokes to help people feel welcome and comfortable. He didn’t want people to just be comfortable with him and each other; but comfortable with God if that were humanly possible.

“God works in strange ways.” People chuckled. “Some of you know I love to read. I read a novel recently that has one paragraph in the whole book that mentions how Christ raised Lazarus from the dead^[2] and how painful it must have been when the sunlight hit Lazarus’ eyes after being dead and buried in a cave for four days. The tomb had just been opened up and the sunlight was pouring in when, all of a sudden, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The sunlight had to hit his eyes as soon they opened.

“The Bible doesn’t explain how he died but it explains the thoughts and feelings of Lazarus’ two

sisters during the time of Lazarus' death. Jesus could have kept him from dying if only he had gotten there sooner. They were angry and hurt," Reverend Hewitt paused for a few seconds. "Just think how much faith they had to have to feel that much anger. It was probably something like: 'Why weren't you here! You could have saved him. You choose to not come here in time!' There must have been a deep unspoken message: You knew he was dying but you took your time. You did not get here until after he died! Why'd you do it? Why'd you wait? Why didn't you come here four days earlier!

"Lazarus' sister was sitting at home when she was told that Jesus was at the tomb. Mary ran to him and fell to his feet in pain. The Bible says he "was deeply moved in the spirit and troubled."^[3] She fell to his feet and literally cried, cried out to him, and Jesus knew in his spirit that she knew he would have saved Lazarus if he had been there. Jesus knew her pain and he wept. It's the shortest verse in the whole Bible: "Jesus wept."^[4]

Reverend Hewitt paused for a minute and looked out at everyone in the congregation. Pain was clearly on his face. "I have to deal with death in my job. It's tough. How can I talk about God's love when someone's young child has died? There are no words. What do I say when someone's spouse is dying in the hospital and the 'healthy' spouse is dying inside. How do I communicate that we can fall at Jesus' feet, even though he's not physically here? That we can call out to him and he will understand? The pain will still be there, and it won't go away any time soon, if ever." He paused for a brief minute. Jesus suffered physically and spiritually and his soul was tormented for what he had to do for mankind.^[5]

"Mary is weeping. Jesus commanded that the stone be rolled away. But Lazarus' other sister, Martha, mentioned the odor, saying indirectly, 'hey, hold on a minute Jesus, there's going to be a bad odor. Let's think about this some more. You're here now, that's all that really matters. You don't have to do anything foolish.' This was right after he talked with her about believing: 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'^[6] His eyes told her that same thing again.

"The stone was rolled away. Jesus was standing in front of the cave with the worst 'odor' imaginable pouring out of it. 'Lazarus,' he orders, 'come out!'^[7] Lazarus came out and Christ told them 'to take off the grave clothes and let him go.'^[8] Jesus also raised a little girl from the dead earlier in his ministry.^[9] Her spirit returned to her and Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

"It's an unusual concept but Jesus knew what people needed after he raised them from the dead: 'Feed her so she can continue to go on living. Let him go so he can move on.' Another example occurred when Jesus saw a dead son of a widow being carried out of town. He knew her pain. He touched the coffin and said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!"^[10] He started talking and Jesus gave him back to his mother. God had a plan for all of them. Lazarus, this little girl and the young man showed unbelievers about the power of the Living Christ.

"Jesus tells us not be afraid of those who kill the body."^[11] This includes disease, accidents, and all kinds of unnatural death as well as natural death. He showed that he has power over death. Only be afraid of the second death^[12] which is eternity without God. This is only possible through Christ.

"Lazarus and the other two were different in that they would testify about Jesus' authority over death and teach about him in ways that no other person ever could."

The service lasted about an hour and a half. Jonathan and Rebecca walked up to the reverend and introduced themselves after he finished preaching. They asked if they could meet with him

because they had an old book called Lazarus' Gospel. He asked them to call his secretary during the week and make an appointment.

They slowly walked out of the sanctuary and decided to look around. They found a small bookstore with different Christian books and Bibles. They walked beyond the bookstore and found a room connected to the kitchen called the Church Community Room. People were casually standing around or sitting at tables with refreshments. "That will hit the spot," Rebecca said looking at the coffee. They picked up some donuts and poured themselves coffee. Jonathan put a couple dollars in a donation jar. They sat down.

"Well Rebecca, what'd you think?"

"I've never thought about death, or life, the way he talked about it. I mean, I always knew what I wanted to do with my life and things like that, but this was different. Our lives will have mattered one way or the other when we die. I had to ask myself what I, and you, had faith in?"

"What was your answer?"

"That was easy. For me, I usually have faith in myself. For you, it's usually technology."

"I agree with you," Jonathan paused as he drank some coffee. "I wonder what Reverend Hewitt will think of Lazarus' Gospel."

"He'll probably think we're crazy," Rebecca said after she finished a donut.

"Maybe, but this is just too much of a coincidence," he said. "Could God really be out there? But... even if God is way out there somewhere, what would he want with us? He's for people who go to churches. I mean, we aren't God's type of people: I'm a computer technical software wizard and you're a rock singer. Of course, you'd be better for God than me. You can sing better than anyone in that choir."

Rebecca didn't say anything for a minute. They just sat there with their coffee. Rebecca was wondering if she could get back into music again. What if God is real, she thought to herself, then if I follow Jesus as Reverend Hewitt suggested....

Jonathan was lost in thought as he looked at Rebecca with lots of love. He noticed how much she enjoyed the music during the church service. At one point she had a tear running down her face. He couldn't figure out a subtle way to ask the question he pondered during the service so he simply asked her: "How'd the music affect you Rebecca?" he asked softly.

"I wanted to run up to the piano and play my songs and show them how to really sing. I could never do that though. They were awesome in their own way. And I loved that old pipe organ." She paused for a few seconds. "I miss it Jonathan. I need to get back into music again. I could at least play at home. The piano anyway, I don't need to play the saxophone. I'd like to go back to the sanctuary and borrow one of the hymnals and play what we sang in church. I'll bring it back next week. No one should miss it. If God can really talk, I think he told me to start playing again; at least to a point." She paused. "Who knows Jonathan, maybe my music is going to come back to life." A few tears were rolling down her face again as another layer of healing was taking place within her soul.

They got up and walked around again after a few more minutes. They walked to the small

bookstore again and looked around. "Maybe we should buy a real Bible," Rebecca said. "One that's written in contemporary English, I don't want to have to decode some ancient English." They looked at a few different Bibles and were confused because there were so many different types.

The lady working there explained how there were different versions with different writing styles. Some were easier than others to understand. They decided on a New International Version Study Bible. The lady told them that a study Bible simply had explanatory notes about the verses in the Bible. "And without any test," she joked. Rebecca asked if they could borrow a hymnal when they bought the Bible. The lady looked baffled for a second: "I can do better than that. Follow me..." she smiled and introduced herself as she walked across the room. She opened a closet door and showed them a small pile of old hymnals: "We're replacing these old ones so you can have one." She reached in and got one that was in good shape. She also gave them a business card and told them to call or drop by if they ever had any more questions.

They held hands as they walked out to their car and Rebecca whispered: "Maybe this is another kind of sign Jonathan."

7

"Seth," Cassandra asked, "if church attendance is down as the experts say, why are there so many churches. If God is dying, shouldn't there be less evidence of religious things?"

"No," Seth responded. He looked at his long time girlfriend admiring her beauty. She constantly amazed him and she meant almost everything to him. "The more religion there is the better," he said. "There isn't any power in religion. It's a dead relic that makes people feel good. It gives them a brief emotional uplift which helps their souls recover as a temporary solution. Then they turn to what the world offers."

Cassandra continued to sketch out a new drawing as she sipped some wine. "Then how should I include churches in my drawings? It's easy to draw images concerning the direction of the world but my visions are fuzzy when it comes to churches."

"Maybe you could draw them as big beautiful architectural works but de-emphasize the cross. TV preachers almost never show a cross. They walk across the stage, give good speeches, and make people feel good. Some of them tell the truth as they see it but they still sell their 'good feeling message' on CDs and DVDs afterwards. It's not the churches that are dying. It's the power of what the cross represents that's dying. Churches by themselves are nothing. That's how we know God is dying. You may want to focus on the weakness of the cross when sketching out the world's power. The source of the world's authority is what's alive as we see every night on the news."

"Good idea," Cassandra responded. "I'll work with that kind of focus in mind. My newest drawing is one of the more difficult ones I've done."

"Also," Seth continued, "we've seen recently how people in some Middle Eastern and Northern African countries have been killing Christians, burning churches, and destroying crosses. Maybe you should subtly, very subtly, have a broken cross in your drawing."

“Not only that,” Cassandra interrupted. “I could put in actual people who have had faith in God but end up in jail or dead. History is full sad examples of people who would have been better off without Jesus Christ. I’ll include some martyrs for Christ in my painting. They learned the hard way about who is in control of the world. It’s not their dying god. They are wasting what the world has to offer.”

Seth smiled as he went behind her and put his arms around her and gave her a tight supportive hug.

8

Jonathan and Rebecca were very surprised that they were able to schedule an appointment with Reverend Hewitt just two days after the church service. “I’m sure he’s very busy,” Rebecca said as they were going into the church administration building, “How could he set up an appointment so fast? It must be because it’s so early in the morning,” she complained.

They were soon being escorted to Reverend Hewitt’s office. The receptionist, Jenifer, asked if anyone would like coffee. Rebecca jokingly asked for an “extra large cup.”

Jonathan was taken aback when he saw two other people in the office. He walked up to the reverend and shook hands: “Thanks for seeing us so quickly Reverend Hewitt.”

“Please, just call me Tom. I’m not fond of formal titles.” Then he shook hands with Rebecca, “It’s good to meet you again Mrs....”

“Oh, just call me Rebecca.”

“This is Sebastian and Julia. They own an antique shop and specialize in ancient religious books. They have an abridged copy of Lazarus’ Gospel in English. The original Greek edition is in Rome. We’re communicating with someone from the Vatican about this ‘gospel’ and when you mentioned it I immediately thought that you two should meet Sebastian and Julia.”

Jonathan was astounded about how much surrounded this ‘new’ book. They all shook hands with an upbeat demeanor that seemed to determine a substantial result from this meeting.

It was a comfortable office. Sebastian and Julia sat on a large sofa. Jonathan and Rebecca each sat in a well padded chair. TOM sat behind his desk. Jenifer walked in and gave Rebecca a large cup coffee. Rebecca was grateful and whispered thank you very much.

“May I see your copy of Lazarus’ Gospel,” Sebastian asked. Rebecca pulled it out of her purse but didn’t really want to get out of the chair. It was too comfortable; she didn’t want to put her coffee down either as she was a little tired. She played hymns from the church hymnal late into the night after Jonathan woke her up thanks to his ‘sabbatical’.

“We bought it at a second hand bookstore near the University YMCA. It looks nice on our coffee table. We eventually started looking through it and knew we found something different. We’ve skipped around in it and there is something called The Fellowship of Jesus the Christ that

John the Baptist helped start. There are others written about, for lack of better words, as 'the founders' of the Holy Spirit or something like that."

Sebastian looked threw it quickly and smiled as he handed it to Julia. She looked at the cover, opened it to a few different pages and "Oh my God," slipped out of her mouth. This made Sebastian laugh. Jonathan looked at them a bit mysteriously. Rebecca knew immediately that they had found something unique. "This isn't really Lazarus's Gospel. It's more about his life and times; his journal would be a more accurate statement." She looked through it some more. "It's authentic Tom, and it's no coincidence that it landed in your office, thanks to Jonathan and Rebecca."

He looked back and forth at both of them. "Would you mind if we made a copy of this?" Rebecca shook her head in the affirmative.

"You found something awesome," Tom was looking at Jonathan and Rebecca. "Lazarus was raised by Jesus as you know. Lazarus, with his experience in life, death, and life again went on to, not only write his gospel, but he founded what was called The Fellowship of Jesus the Christ. It's often called The Fellowship for simplicity. You're right in that John the Baptist was considered the founding Father. John was filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth^[13]. He's unique in that no other human had the Holy Spirit at birth. Unfortunately he's the first martyr of this group."

Jonathan's look of puzzlement took Reverend Hewitt by surprise. "Do you know much about the Bible?" he asked them.

Rebecca mentioned how they bought their first one at the bookstore. She didn't tell him about her aunt. But she mentioned the hymnal and explained she was up late playing the hymns on the piano the night before.

"What a great idea," Tom said pleasantly surprised. "I'm glad you enjoy it. Keep it up. You'll learn a lot about God. I'll have to suggest that to those in the congregation who can play the piano. It's a creative way to learn." He paused and looked at everyone in his office as a new thought went through his mind.

"Maybe, just maybe, The Fellowship of Jesus the Christ is going to make a comeback. Sebastian and Julia can tell you about how they got Lazarus' Gospel later. We're communicating with a priest in Rome about it. We've found out that there has been a historical evil against this Fellowship of Jesus the Christ. John the Baptist had his head cut off, Jesus was crucified on a cross, and there are many violent examples against people involved with The Fellowship. Most of those involved tended to call Jesus by his formal name: Jesus the Christ which means The Messiah. It's the most honorific title that can be given him. Satan hates The Fellowship and will cause as much harm, destruction, or death, if possible, to anyone who wants to be in this Fellowship of Jesus the Christ.

"Anyway, what you found is Lazarus's journal, or at least part of it. You found a missing link to what we've been looking for. It looks like we're getting in deeper as time goes on. God may want The Fellowship reignited."

Julia stood up suddenly. "Wait a second. John the Baptist got his head cut off. He's only one of many examples. There is deception behind the evil that killed him. He was beheaded due to the result of a seductive dance. But it was the master of evil, or the spirit of this world, the spirit of death, that killed John the Baptist. It's that same evil, evil that disguises itself, evil that masquerades as anything but evil. This is what put Jesus on the cross. This is what we'll be up

against if we go ahead with this.

“Granted, we do live in the United States and the local authorities are not going to cut our heads off. But danger is involved. This group went under ground for protection. Tom learned from Rome that The Fellowship of Jesus the Christ consolidated in 800 AD in a monastery built by St Gregory of Khandzta located in north eastern Turkey. Research on John the Baptist, Lazarus, his two sisters, and especially Mary, the mother of Jesus was unparalleled. They discovered not only secrets of The Fellowship, but secrets of Satan too. They put Biblical truths into practice and analyzed the lives of those recorded in the New Testament. They also discovered a couple letters written between Lazarus and Paul. There weren't any letters between Peter and Lazarus because they usually talked. That was good for them but bad for us because their discussions went to their graves with them. Peter's letters in the New Testament overlap Lazarus' writings to a small degree. Lazarus was more about defeating Satan and defending Christ Followers during the End Times.

“Monks, nuns, and others dedicated their lives to Lazarus' Gospel and his other writings at St. Gregory's monastery. Their spiritual strength and knowledge proliferated as they studied throughout the centuries. Each generation built upon what the previous generation discovered. Eventually, Satan became paranoid, for lack of a better word. They were researching ways to make him weak. His grip on the world was tightening. But times were slowly changing against him. That monastery was a risk to him and he's not use to risk because he controls the kingdoms of the world. Satan offered the kingdoms of the world to Jesus if Jesus would worship him [14]. Satan can give any kingdom to whomever he wants to. Christ would not worship him. Anyway, Satan attacked The Fellowship while destroying the work being done in St Gregory of Khandzta monastery. It's no coincidence that the monastery was evacuated when the Islamists of the Ottoman Empire were conquering that area around the 1500s. So The Fellowship lasted about 700 years in that monastery.

“Satan knew he had to keep on the offence. He's been on a killing spree since Cain killed Able. [15] He was put on defense during Jesus' time and had to stay on defense when Jesus' mother, Lazarus and his two sisters started The Fellowship. But it wasn't a major problem until a few hundred of years later when The Fellowship was getting very strong. Satan realized he had a major problem on his hands. Each individual of The Fellowship, known as an Elisha Saint, had a mission and a personal commitment to defeat Satan through prayer, faith, love and other strategic strategies. They let people know about eternal rewards for works of faith [16] and the different degrees of punishment in hell for unbelievers. [17] These Elisha Saints were able influence people when they combined the two ideas. They also taught that friendship with the world equaled enmity with God. [18] Who wants to be an enemy of God? They were able to make it a 'no brainer' to many of those they spoke to. Many of these people became Christ Followers. Then a small percentage of those who began a relationship with Christ wanted to become Elisha Saints. A vicious cycle was created from Satan's point of view....”

Many thoughts were going through Jonathan's mind and he had to interrupt Julia. “Did you say that started around 800 AD,” he asked her.

“Yes, as far as consolidating The Fellowship at St Gregory of Khandzta's monastery. He offered them a part of his monastery for research and as a base to proclaim their message from. They would go out to 'the ends of the world' from what is now a part of northeastern Turkey.”

“Why are they called Elisha Saints” Rebecca asked.

“There's an involved explanation about that. We can get to that at another time because it's very important. Anyway, those in The Fellowship struggled concerning the love of Christ. They were being killed. Should they get weapons and fight back or use a different strategy. They had to look

to Jesus himself as well as Paul and the Apostles who were up against Rome. They decided not to fight back with violent weapons but they would continue to fight Satan through the Holy Spirit," he paused for a few seconds. "It seems things never change. If things continue on the same track that they're on now, it seems as if history is going to repeat itself within the next couple generations. Christians could easily be up against militant Islamic terrorist. It seems as if that stage is already set."

"It's not just Islam," Julia jumped in. "It's all religions, philosophies, and all the different types of 'the wisdom of man' that fail to give Jesus true acceptance and honor."

"There is a deep history behind The Fellowship. It went up against the evil that put Jesus on the cross. It's no game or some 'thing' that can be taken lightly. Satan has been at this since the Fall of Adam and Eve. That was long before the Ottoman Empire. The Khandzta monastery was a tool of God and abandoned due to Islamic threats, persecution, and killings. The Fellowship splintered into different groups throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These different groups took all the faith and knowledge they gained in Khandzta's monastery with them. Diverse and new types of knowledge were recorded by all these different groups as time moved on. Rome eventually became the final destination for much of that information. The information that can be found is being consolidated again. Satan will try to stop The Fellowship as he did before if we start it up again."

Jenifer walked into the office with a copy of Lazarus' Gospel.

Jonathan had a thought as he watched her walk across the room. She was giving it to Tom when Jonathan suggested they each read a copy during the week. "Then we can come back next week and talk about all of this."

"That's a good idea," Sebastian said, "we could do some brainstorming and see what we all come up with."

"We'd have to do it at another time," Julia interrupted. "Saturday mornings would be better for us because we always have part-time help on Saturdays."

"That would be better for me too," Tom said.

"Why don't you all come over to our house on Saturday morning," Jonathan suggested.

"Or how about coming over for brunch...." Rebecca broke in quickly to get away from 'the morning' part of his offer. "Let's say around eleven.... Or even a little later." They settled for lunch to Rebecca's great relief.

Jenifer made four more copies before they left.

Julia called Rebecca the next day and asked her if they could all meet for a late dinner that evening.

Rebecca though this was too sudden but could hear tension in Julia's voice so she agreed. She knew Jonathan wasn't busy. There was a local TGIF where they could all meet. Julia also asked her to bring their copies of Lazarus's book with her.

Julia called Reverend Hewitt and left voicemail explaining they would all meet at Friday's around 7:00. He listened but decided not to go. He knew that the two couples would have to get to know each other. They would be the ones involved in the spiritual battle that he assumed was brewing if The Fellowship started up again. *

This is a thought provoking and entertaining novel. It takes us back to Jesus's time while staying connected to current times. Join Rebecca and Jonathan on their journey as they find what's revealed in their copy of Lazarus's Gospel. Their book discloses Lazarus's vision after Jesus raises him from the dead as recorded in the Gospel of John 11: 1~45. The ancient group Lazarus started is reignited today in the novel. It shows how events of today are fulfilling what prophecy spoke about over a thousand years ago. It's only a matter of time until the book of Revelation comes alive right before our very eyes in real life. Events in the Middle East, as well as right here in the United States, say that we're possibly in the Last Days already. Research done while writing Lazarus's Gospel show how long-term trends have developed, how they are escalating, and what might come in the future. These results are incorporated into Lazarus's Gospel in a creative way. It also has hundreds of Bible references listed in the footnotes to be reviewed if desired. Research done while writing Lazarus's Gospel show how long-term trends have developed, how they are escalating, and what might come in the future. These results are incorporated into Lazarus's Gospel in a creative way. It also has hundreds of Bible references listed in the footnotes to be reviewed if desired. Some people have expressed an interest in developing some of the ideas brought out in the novel. Ben is helping them develop these and/or listening to their advice. For more information please feel free to contact Ben: BenFerris10@gmail.com; (210) 776-8794.

The Gospel of John - CliffsNotes - Amazon.com: The Gospel According to Lazarus (9780720620627): Richard Zimler: Books. Gospel truth demonstrated, in a collection of doctrinal - Book Lazarus Synonym - Gospel of John Summary. The Gospel of John begins with a lovely little poem about Jesus. Here's what we learn: He is God's word in human form. He's come to Gospel of Mary commentary - Lazarus and the Fourth Gospel Community. Front Cover. Frederick W. Baltz. Mellen Biblical Press, 1996 - Religion - 109 pages. 0 Reviews Acts 12 Bible Study - Alan Lazarus a bishop - PersÃ©e - Kyle A. King Review: "The Gospel according to Lazarus" by Richard Zimler - For unto every one that hath thing is needful, and Mary (the sister of Lazarus) hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Lu. x. 42. The seven signs of John - Read The Gospel of Lazarus (The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved)

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