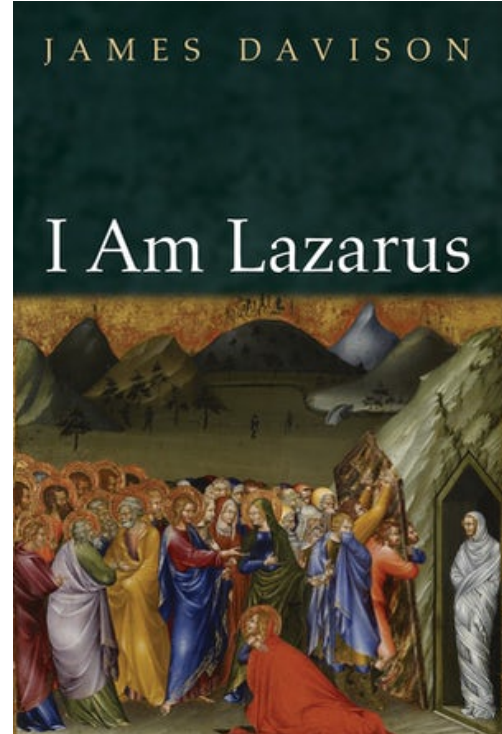


Interview With Author James Davison

We sometimes wonder what God's plan is for our short time on Earth. In this story, three people resurrected by the Son of God – Lazarus of Bethany, the daughter of Jarius, and the son of the widow from Nain – are stunned when the apostle Paul reveals that they are now immortal. In James Davison's fictional memoir, *I Am Lazarus*, the three travel across the centuries, collecting and preserving the words of Jesus Christ. But it soon becomes clear that they must also become warriors for Christ as they elude a persistent group of zealots who are determined to permanently return them to the grave.



What inspired you to write, “I Am Lazarus?”

The resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany is mentioned in three books of the bible. The shortest verse of the bible, John 11:35, reports that “Jesus wept” at the news his friend, Lazarus of Bethany, had died. Four days later, Jesus approached the tomb and commanded Lazarus to “come forth.” That is true friendship, if your friend loves you so much that he would resurrect you from the dead. I also theorized that Jesus had another, more interesting reason; say, to have Lazarus nurture and shepherd Christianity through the ages into modern times. I always thought the life of Lazarus, and the other two whom Jesus raised from the dead demanded to be told.

How did you do the research?

I started reading the bible in earnest as a young teen. In addition, I am an avid reader of all genre's, and I especially love historical non-fiction and fiction. In deciding to write a fictional memoir of Lazarus of Bethany, I started with the bible, and branched out to virtually every other resource. History records that Lazarus actually did flee Judea after the crucifixion and in time became a significant religious fixture on Cyprus. I spent months immersed in research about Lazarus, the apostles, and crafted the story of how he helped shape what the world today knows as Christianity.

Lazarus was named in the bible, but Sarah and Elan were not. How did you select their names?

Since Lazarus and his story is the central arc of my book, I left his name as it is in the bible. Though Sarah and Elan are not named in the biblical accounts of their respective resurrections, I simply chose two names I liked.

"I Am Lazarus" is conceived as a trilogy, and both Sarah and Elan's stories will be quite important to our history when I finish book three.

What is the significance of the three resurrections of Lazarus, Sarah, and Elan?

To me, the resurrections are clearly done by Jesus to demonstrate that as the Son of God, he has complete control over life and death. Two of the resurrections show that death is defeated through simple belief in the savior. Lazarus believed Jesus was the son of God. Jarius, (Sarah's father), believed that Jesus could, and would, heal his sick daughter. Elan's mother, (the widow from Nain), elicited compassion from Jesus, and that compassion led him to resurrect the young man in front of a large and very public crowd of mourners.

Elan's resurrection is the most public and could be couched as perhaps the most dangerous one for Jesus. As I wrote in the passage after this miracle, the religious and Roman authorities probably were very concerned that if this man, Jesus, could resurrect the dead then what was to prevent him from resurrecting their enemies and turning that resurrected army against them.

How did you create the world of Lazarus?

I've lived with Lazarus in my head for years. That he finally decided to come out was cathartic, and entertaining. His story, combining the true, biblical one, and the fictional, 2,000-year-old one, were immensely fun to write. I imagined what it might be like, to not age as those around you did. That first question, "what would you do if..." guided every word as I wrote the adventures Lazarus, Sarah and Elan experienced. There have been dozens of TV shows, movies, plays, etc. around this topic, so it wasn't that hard to put me into his shoes, so to speak, and begin telling his story.

Who is Sarah?

I wanted Sarah to be loved by anyone who reads I Am Lazarus. In her I combined all the sweetness and innocence of my friends and family. I also gave her personality a fierceness born of her circumstances, i.e., a young Hebrew woman born in the time of Jesus, her death and resurrection, suspicions by townspeople of witchcraft and the threats on her life, fleeing with a man she did not know, becoming a warrior, retreating into herself to heal her psychological wounds, etc. She will one day know human love, but not in book one.

Why does Elan question his resurrection?

Elan feels the need to understand why he was resurrected. It lent a bit of mystery and suspense to the story, especially as he develops an intense interest in science and the sky (where everyone thinks God lives). Lazarus was given a charge by Jesus, but Elan wasn't, he was just told to meet Sarah and then to find Lazarus. His desire to go into the sky, or into the realm of God to ask why he'd been brought back to life is what drives him. It will significantly inform his future actions until he actually meets God.

One thing I never really touch on in Book One of the Trilogy, is where his questions eventually take Elan. This will be very clear in books two and three of the series.

Do you believe in angels?

Absolutely. When I wrote the account of Sarah's resurrection, an experience from my childhood served as the basis for that. I was quite ill as a child, and during one particularly bad evening I died. What I wrote for Sarah is somewhat like what I experienced that day; swirling angels, a large, orange/white circle above my bed, a singular angel holding my hand and telling me it wasn't my time yet. Now I know one of the reasons I experienced that; to eventually use it in this book, and I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to present it as Sarah's.

Are you a religious person?

I believe in God. I believe in Jesus, his Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit too. I was raised Episcopalian until the age of 10, then we moved to a Pentecostal Church where I very clearly saw and experienced the fruits of the Spirit. Those experiences grounded me in my belief and knowledge of Jesus. I also believe that I was guided in my thoughts and research as I sat at the dining room table and typed the story of Lazarus, Sarah, and Elan.

What do you think happens to us after we die?

The Bible says every human will face judgement. The thief crucified to the left of Jesus saw the Roman's mocking Jesus and said 'Lord, when you are in your kingdom, would you please remember me.' His simple expression of belief led Jesus, in the agony of his crucifixion, to say, "today, you will be with me in paradise." Perhaps that is all it took before Christ's resurrection, which many biblical scholars say changed what happens to us when we die. I also believe that our sins must be forgiven, through belief in Christ, which is also biblical, for us to be granted entrance into heaven after our deaths and judgement.

There is something called the "Great White Throne Judgement," where, all who have ever lived will stand before God and be judged. I know that I do not want to be found wanting on that day.

I will finish with Ephesians 2: 8-9, which lays out clearly that no one will spend eternity with God based solely on what they've done. It is only faith in Christ that saves a person.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. Not a result of works, so that no one may boast."