

The Gospel of John

11:38-48

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.
As with this study and all bible studies, remember to pray before you start.

Two weeks ago we started the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.
Last week we got to the point where Jesus was just ready to go to the tomb where Lazarus was buried, ending with Jesus weeping and the Jews saying.

✧ **John 11:36-37** *Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"*

So let's get started in this week's study.

✧ **John 11:38** *Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.*

The word "groaning" means: *Primarily signifies "to snort with anger, as of horses." Used of men it signifies "to fret, to be painfully moved;" then, "to express indignation against;" hence, "to rebuke sternly, to charge strictly,"*

When my son was a little four-month-old baby he was a chowhound. He could eat, and eat, and eat. When it was feeding time, I would take him in one arm and have the bottle in my other hand. But the first thing he did was put his fist up to his mouth because he was hungry. Now if he would have just moved his fist away then he would have gotten his bottle, but still he didn't understand this and I had to physically move his fist way from his mouth so he could get what he needed. But even as I did, he still tried to put his fist back in his mouth before I could get the bottle to his mouth.

This gets frustrating sometimes, because I knew if he would just understand that all he needs to do is move his little fist out of the way, that he would get what he needed.

That's sort of what was going on here, the Jews knew that Jesus was around, but they had their fists in their mouths (so to speak) and could not understand the real miracle that was about to happen.

With my little boy I could understand a little of what was going on here, because I groan within myself thinking, "*Why can't he just understand that I am trying to give him what he needs.*"

I have to wonder what Jesus was thinking at this time. Jesus knew that God was about to do something great, but these people just didn't get it.

They were so fixed on Jesus being able to heal that they didn't understand that He also had the power to raise the dead, even though He had done it before.

† **Luke 7:13-15** *When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.*

† **Luke 8:54-55** *But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.*

These two accounts happened before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. But they didn't remember, all they could see was what was right before them at the time. But how many times do we do the same thing? The Lord will do something great in our lives, but when trials or temptations come later, we doubt the power of God. Does God only do one miracle per person? Cannot the God who helped you before, help you again? Has God lost His hearing because it doesn't seem like He hears you now? Didn't God show up, or should I say, take care of the problem in just the right time? How quickly we forget, just like a four-month-old little baby boy.

So Jesus arrives at the tomb, which *was a cave, and a stone lay against it*. Now this is dead, I mean really dead. It would be like when someone dies and they are buried in the ground dead. Lazarus was wrapped and anointed with the various spices and herbs for burial and the casket was shut (so to speak). No, there was no casket, but by rolling a stone in front of the tomb it was just about the same thing. You see, in these caves where people were buried, they would roll a huge stone in front of it, probably to keep the smell from getting out as well as keeping grave robbers from stealing from peoples loved ones. But when the stone was rolled in front of a tomb, there was a ditch of sorts that the stone would sit in, so to remove a stone from in front of a tomb was a major task, which was more than a one-man job.

Makes you wonder how people could say that Jesus was not really dead, but in a comma or something. Here Jesus who was whipped 39 times, with his flesh hanging off His bones. Beaten in the face and had His beard ripped out from his flesh. A crown of two-inch long thorns jammed upon his head. Nails the size of railroad spikes pounded in His wrist and feet to hold Him to a chunk of wood raised up in the air. Being in that position for six hours, then having a spear thrust in His side piercing His lung. Then wrapped in over a hundred pounds of wrapping, spices and oils. After that this huge stone was placed in front of His tomb, with this boulder is now sitting in a trench.

So according to some people, Jesus awoke from His comma, removed over a hundred pounds of wrappings, pushed the stone away and overpowered the Roman guards who where guarding the tomb.

Just goes to show you that people will believe the stupidest things, but refuse to believe the truth!

Usually at this point in the story of Lazarus, a lot will teach that the stench represents sin, and the grave clothes or wrapping represent how we are bound by sin. Then they will teach that we are to release those bound in sin and set them free. These are good

teachings and I have heard a lot of them, so I won't go there, because you probably heard them also.

So let's just look at what was happening.

✠ **John 11:39** *Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."*

Notice Jesus didn't say, "I wonder what would happen if you rolled that stone away?" or "Do you think you guys have time right now to move that stone away from the tomb?" No, this was not a question that Jesus was presenting, but rather Jesus was telling them to do it, and our friend Martha does the exact thing we do even today. She questioned Jesus and what He was doing.

✠ *Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."*

"Jesus, You want me to do what?"

"Are you sure You know what You are doing?"

Reminds me of another person in the bible.

✠ **Ex 4:10-13** *Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."*

I'm sure I've said it here before, but I will say it again. When you start to give the Lord excuses, it's just another way of saying "no" to God.

At this point, Martha's faith was not that great, but that didn't prevent Jesus from doing what He was going to do. Some people have the nerve to say that if you are not healed that you just don't have enough faith or if your prayers aren't answered you don't have enough faith. If that was the case, then with Martha's faith, the stone would never had gotten rolled away, much less her brother being raised from the dead.

Yes, we are to have faith, but when we base things upon how much faith we have then we are putting the work upon ourselves.

What about Paul who was a man of faith, but still he told Timothy.

✠ **1 Tim 5:23 (NLT)** *Don't drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.*

For whatever reason, God did not heal Timothy at this time. Was Timothy, or even Paul's faith so small that God couldn't heal Timothy; or didn't they have enough faith to "force" God to heal Timothy? No, they had the faith, but their faith was in God, not in what they thought God should be doing.

So have faith and trust in God, and if God does not heal you or answer your prayers right away, it doesn't mean you don't have enough faith, it means that God has a better plan. We learned that two weeks ago in the beginning of this chapter.

✎ **John 11:40-42** *Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."*

Starting in verse 40, very simply put, "when in doubt, check God's word out!" Martha was in doubt and Jesus was reminding her of His words, which would encourage her. But not only her, but also the others who were around her.

✎ *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying.*

I wonder how many ran up to move the stone away? Was it one or two because the rest doubted, or was it a bunch of guys who wanted to see what Jesus was going to do?

✎ **And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."**

Jesus was not a glory hound or a show off. Jesus at this point was about to do a great miracle, but He also wanted to make sure that God received the glory. Unfortunately, we boast a lot in ourselves, instead of what God is doing through us. We want God to receive the glory, but we want to be sure that we are standing right next to God on the pedestal receiving the glory to. Don't do this, let it all go to God, you will receive your reward in due time in heaven. I would rather hear God say:

✠ **Matt 25:21** *His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

Then get a pat on the back from man here on this earth.

✎ **John 11:43** *Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"*

Talk about faith, Jesus didn't just whisper "Lazarus come forth, ok?"

No, Jesus knew what God wanted to be done and He was ready to make sure that all knew it. At this point there was only about a week left before Jesus would be crucified, and He wanted everyone to have the opportunity to believe in Him. Jesus was not only proclaiming the awesomeness of God, but was fighting for the souls of those who were around. This would be a major miracle that many would see and afterward how could any doubt Him, but so many did.

So why did Jesus say, "**Lazarus, come forth!**"

If He didn't, then all those who were dead would have risen, so Jesus had to call out Lazarus by name. Remember that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and there were many who were ready to be resurrected. But it wasn't time for the rest of them yet. But not too long afterwards, some of these did rise.

✠ **Matt 27:50-53** *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*

Just don't confuse this with the rapture of the church.

✠ **John 11:44** *And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "**Loose him, and let him go.**"*

Think of the scene here. Jesus comes up and tells the people to move the stone away from the tomb. So all these guys run up there and move it away. After that they all stand there and they are staring at Jesus to see what He will do. Then Jesus yells out "**Lazarus, come forth!**"

Then all eyes move from Jesus to the tomb (kind of like a tennis match with the people looking back and forth at the players). As they look at the tomb they see this bunch of grave clothes hopping out and everyone (except Jesus) now has their mouth wide open as they are amazed at what they see.

So Jesus needs to get their attention again and says, "**Loose him, and let him go.**"

You know they moved quickly, because they wanted to make sure that this was really Lazarus and not just a trick of some sort. As they peel the wrapping away, they see God's awesomeness, because it is Lazarus!

What a touching way to end the story, but that's not the end of the story. Now we start to see the results. We tend to want to see the miracles, but forget why they are done, that's to glorify the Lord and cause others to believe.

✠ **John 11:45** *Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.*

This is the answer to why Jesus didn't run down and heal Lazarus right away, but even waited four days before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

You see, if Jesus would have come and healed Lazarus right away, the people had seen this type of thing already from Jesus, but some weren't ready yet to believe, they still doubted and needed something more. This was that something more that they needed.

It's the same way with becoming a Christian. Some are ready the moment they first hear the gospel, but for others will take longer, because they need more than just one sermon or one person witnessing to them. They need to search the scriptures more and/or really see a change in a person's life before they are ready to believe.

God is patient and loving, and He will give that person what they need to believe so they won't perish, but have everlasting life. God will pull out all the stops to help someone believe, but no matter what God does, some just refuse to believe.

✎ **John 11:46** *But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.*

So do you think the Pharisees were jumping up and down for joy when they heard this? I don't think so.

✎ **John 11:47-48** *Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."*

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out demons, and now raised a man from the dead. What more did Jesus need to do to prove that the power of God was in Him. But all the religious leaders could think about was what the Roman government would do.

These are the same men who had memorized the first five books of the bible. Had they forgotten how God delivered their ancestors (the children of Israel) from the hand Pharaoh? Could not the same God deliver them from the Roman government?

But the problem was that they didn't really serve God, but rather the Roman government. I say this because their own words testify to this.

✠ **John 19:14-16** *Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.*

So was there no one who would stand up for Jesus? Did none of them believe in Jesus? One did. Or did he?

Next week we will find out.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy, and may you take your fist out of your mouth and allow the Lord to richly bless you.