

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Six – The Raising of Lazarus – John 11:17-44

We’ve divided this passage into FOUR PARTS:

1. THE SETTING—verses 17-19
2. JESUS WITH MARTHA—verses 20-28
3. JESUS WITH MARY—verses 29-37
4. JESUS WITH LAZARUS—verses 38-44

In this particular picture of the Lord Jesus He’s able to meet every need. He’s able to take a person, whatever their need is, and meet that need. We see how He does it creatively in the lives of these people that come before us.

In ministry there are people that have open doors to care for and meet the needs of those who travel in ministry. Jesus had a neat place that He always went. It was just two miles from

downtown Jerusalem where He did a lot of His teaching. That was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Many times He went there just to rest and get away from the crowds and have some time before He faced the pressures again of teaching and being involved.

Jesus has been in the city of Jerusalem just prior to, and it was super tense in that there was a lot of opposition. It's gotten worse. In fact, when He was there in Jerusalem last time they nearly took His life.

The disciples are scared and they've left. And now a letter comes and it's from Mary and Martha. We read in John 11:

John 11:3

Therefore his sisters sent unto him saying, "Lord, behold he whom you love is sick."

In other words, Lazarus isn't feeling good. The Lord sends a message to the sisters saying:

John 11:4

This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Now that's the message He sent back. And then immediately He turns to the disciples with a proposal and He says, "Fellows it's going to be necessary for us to go back down

there.” Thomas, he’s a super pessimist, comes in and says, “Lord, are You really sure You know what You’re doing? We just about got run out of there and stoned on top of that. And now You’re going to go right back into the eye of the storm.”

Thomas is such a great encourager. He says, “Well, come on. Let’s go die with Him. We might as well all join the thing and everybody will just give their lives.”

They all went down there, sort of in this disgruntled fashion, and the Lord said, “You know, I’m glad that you went there, because Lazarus was already asleep.” And of course, He meant physical death.

Now let’s turn the picture back to these people and the situation in Bethany, because that’s the passage that’s before us.

The Lord Jesus made His promise there, that it wasn’t unto death, it was going to be for the glory of God. Could these two girls actually survive and trust God with all of the evidence contrary to the promises which He had made?

This is a super test of their faith. Can they trust God with all the evidence to the contrary, when all they have are the promises which He made and the evidence to the contrary of those?

Let’s see what happens as we go through the passage.

I. THE SETTING—verses 17-19

v. 17 Then Jesus having come found that he had been already four days in the tomb.

“Then Jesus having come found that he had been already four days in the tomb.”

Alright, when Jesus arrives at the city of Bethany, He gets the news that Lazarus has been dead for four days. Let’s pretend that we’re the local CBS announcer and we’re conducting a poll. We’re going door-to-door in Bethany and announcing the word that Jesus has just gotten here and we’re giving everybody an opportunity to express their opinion.

“See, I want to know, sir do you believe that Jesus has arrived on time?”

“No, I do not.”

“Ma’am, how do you feel about the fact that we’ve got the new arrival of Jesus in town? Do you feel that He made it on time?”

“No, I do not.”

Go over and knock on Mary and Martha’s door and ask, “Mary, do you feel that Jesus got here in time?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Martha, do you?”

“No, I don’t.”

That’s one hundred percent in this pole. It’s all against Jesus.
“Lord, You’re late.”

Now we go to Jesus and say, “Jesus, are You late?”

He says, “Absolutely not. I’m right on schedule.”

Now in order for us to understand the impact of what Jesus is saying here, of being right on time from His perspective, and everybody else thinks He’s late, is part of the traditions that the Jews went through.

The tradition, according to Josephus, for the burial of some guy that checked out was that as quick as they could they’d put him in the tomb because they didn’t have the ability to preserve the bodies. And it was a very hot, dry climate so they got the guy in the grave as quickly as they could. And so they put Lazarus in the grave.

But the Jews also had something else that they felt very strongly about. And that was that the spirit of the guy who died flew around the tomb until four days had passed and then the countenance of the guy inside changed and the spirit departed and he was really dead after four days.

So Jesus is waiting for four days because He wants to impress

upon these people that this is a guy who's experienced physical death. Even in accordance with their traditions, this guy is dead and there's no explanation for the miracle apart from the fact that he has been given life once again.

So He's waiting four days for an express purpose.

v. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles.

“Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles.”

Well, this little city was the place of retreat and it was only a couple of miles, just an easy jog out there. Notice in verse 19 that a lot of people come.

v. 19 Now many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, in order that they might comfort them concerning their brother.

“Now many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, in order that they might comfort them concerning their brother.”

The Lord Jesus creatively takes these three different personalities and He meets the needs of each heart. We don't have any need that the Lord Jesus cannot meet if we're willing to open up to Him and allow Him to work in our life.

Now let's see Him with Martha, first of all, in verses 20-28.

II. JESUS WITH MARTHA—verses 20-28

v. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went out to meet Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

“Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went out to meet Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.”

Martha is one of the most delightful persons in the scripture. If you were to try to parallel her to a disciple, she'd be like Peter. She'd be sweet and loveable, always got something good to say.

Martha was super active. She was not one who could sit around and be quiet for very long. The thing that really bugged her the most was that verse in the Bible said, “Be still and know that I'm God.” She just couldn't hack that one. That was pretty tough.

Martha is only seen in three places in the Bible. In all three of them she has the same performance and the same character.

1. We see her in Luke 10.

Jesus has just come from an exhausting teaching experience and He comes to the house, Mary gets Him into the living room and sits on the floor while He's sitting on the couch relaxing. He's sharing some of the things that have happened.

Martha, as soon as she hears He's there, she hits the swinging doors and she's in the kitchen. She's got the microwave on, got the roast going, she's got potatoes, she's got iced tea. And she's doing the whole thing and she's flouncing around there just trying to get everything ready and she is just in a tizzy.

Pretty soon something happens. She becomes aware of the fact that she's alone in the kitchen and that there is something going on in the living room. This is coupled with the fact that the roast is burned and a few other things fell apart and there's nobody to set the table and put the ice in the glasses. And she begins to think, "You know, it really would be nice if my sister would get in here and help me."

And this begins to really bug her and it eats on her for just a few minutes. "You know, I know she's going to come soon, but it's ticking me off the longer she waits."

Well, after she stewes in this frenzy over all the problems that she's facing in the kitchen, she finally blows through the swinging doors and she doesn't even go to Mary. She goes to the guest of honor. She goes right up to Jesus with her hand on her hips and she says, "Lord! Don't you care that she's left me alone? You know, here she is sitting in here doing nothing and I'm out there killing myself to get dinner ready and she's not doing a thing about it!"

Well, this is really interesting because the Lord Jesus said, "You know, Martha, you're worried and troubled about a lot of things. Mary has chosen a good part."

A lot of people see those two girls and they say, “We never would get anything done if we didn’t have some Martha’s around and we have these Mary’s just sitting around all the time.”

Now that’s not the lesson we’re supposed to get out of that. The lesson we get out of that is the fact that Mary always had time to do what Martha was doing, but she had her priorities straight.

The very first assignment that we received as a Christian was that the Lord wants to be with us. There’s nothing more important than that. It’s not important how vital we think our service is and how indispensable we are to God. The very first and most important assignment we have is to be with the Lord. That’s the reason Mary received that commendation.

Now Mary got up and put ice in the glasses and set the table and did her thing and was amazed at the amount of time she had to do those things, after she spent some time with the Lord.

Our priorities need to be straight and we have to spend time with Him first. And then we get about the business. Because it’s when we’re spending time with Him that we get the assignments that He wants for us to do.

If we go and get started and kind of try to anticipate what He wants us to do, we’re going to run around in circles. Like John

Madden says of some pro football players, “They’re muscular mountains of immaturity running in opposite directions.”
(source unknown)

Well, that’s really true. Oftentimes when we don’t really spend time with the Lord, we try to anticipate what He wants us to do and we’re in a frenzy of activity, being sent on missions that the Lord never intended for us to be sent on. And spending our time and energy in doing things that He did not mean for us to do.

2. We see Martha here in John 11, and she’s true to character.

3. We see her in chapter 12 waiting on tables.

Now if she were here today, she’d be a tad bit on the heavy side because she loved cooking. She’s a sweet, light-hearted, loveable woman.

And she just really always enjoyed organizing everybody. She had kind of an administrative gift in the sense that when she got into the middle of things, all the responsibility fell on her shoulders. And she just worked everything out and got everybody going their way and doing their thing. Just to free everybody. She was sort of the self-sacrificing person along this line.

v. 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

“Then Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

In other words, “Lord, You’re late. You didn’t make it this time.”

Martha feels that the Lord Jesus had to be there in presence. And if He had been there in presence Lazarus wouldn’t have died.

To her the fact that He died meant that it was too late. To her the fact that physical death had occurred, now there was nothing that could be done.

But if the Lord Jesus had gotten there in immediate response to their note, if He’d have hustled down there before he died, there would have been some hope that everything could have worked out alright.

Now some people have said, “Well, Martha just didn’t really understand the fact that the Lord Jesus doesn’t have to be a visible presence to be there.”

And that’s true. The Word says, “Lo, I’m with you always. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You’re with me.” (ref. Hebrews 13:5, Psalm 23:4)

So the Lord has promised us His presence, even though we

can't see Him visibly as Christians.

v. 22 And now I am knowing that whatever you may ask God, God will give it to you.”

“And now I am knowing that whatever you may ask God, God will give it to you.”

In other words, “I’m impressed with the fact that you’ve got a hotline to heaven. You’re going to be able to get whatever is necessary.”

v. 23 Jesus is saying to her, “Your brother will arise.”

“Jesus is saying to her, ‘Your brother will arise.’”

Now there is a simple statement of what is about to take place.

“Your brother will arise.”

That’s the Lord Jesus communicating with her and saying, “Martha, this is what I’m about to do. Your brother will arise.”

Martha hears that. We almost want to cry with her, because she’s suffered from bereavement, she’s shed tears, and her heart is soft and broken. Even though she is this sweet, loveable, active person, she’s really been devastated by this.

v. 24 Martha is saying to Him, I am knowing that he will

arise in the resurrection on the last day.”

“Martha is saying to Him, I am knowing that he will arise in the resurrection on the last day.”

What does she do? She just runs the reel all the way to the future.

The Lord couldn't be talking about now. He's only talking about some future day. “I lost my brother now. To wait for the resurrection is a long time. That's not very much comfort.”

How many times do we do the very same thing? The Lord Jesus, if He could walk into the room, what would He say to us?

He'd say, “You know, you're looking on Me in terms of what it's going to be like at some future time. You're looking at Me from the standpoint of the pie-in-the-sky. I really would like to be your Lord right now. I'd like to show you how faithful I can be to My promises, if you'd just trust Me right now and not look at Me only in terms of some future date.”

Martha can only see Him in terms of that, when she makes a statement like this.

v. 25 Jesus said to her, “I myself am the resurrection and the life; the one who is believing in me, even if he die, shall live.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I myself am the resurrection and the life; the one who is believing in me, even if he die, shall live.’”

Now Jesus says TWO THINGS about Himself here:

1. He says He’s a LIFE GIVER and
2. He says He’s also “THE LIFE,” which He gives.

And then we see that neat statement in verse 26, as He continues the conversation:

v. 26 And everyone who is living and believing in me shall positively never die (shall by no means die into the ages). Are you believing this?

“And everyone who is living and believing in me shall positively never die (shall by no means die into the ages). Are you believing this?”

That’s a great promise. As Christians, as a result of coming into a relationship with Jesus Christ, that’s the promise the Lord gives us.

He says, “you’re never going to die.”

We all know Christians who have died physically.

We do, but not spiritually. The Bible says, “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” (ref. 2 Corinthians

5:8)

Checking out here is checking in there. Death is the anesthetic God uses while He's changing bodies. It's really cool, because we finish here and we go there—as a Christian, that is.

And so this is the reason that He makes this great statement to her.

Then He says, “Are you believing this?”

Why is He asking her that? One of the hardest things we're going to find in our life when we hit a crisis, is to be able to implement what we know. In fact, we can tell the level of our spiritual maturity by that.

Now it's one thing to know something, it's another thing to put it in practice. And right now He's coming right to the heart of the matter. He's saying, “Martha, are you really believing this?”

“We've got a person who knows Me will never positively never die into the ages.”

In verse 27 she gives her statement of creed:

v. 27 She is saying to Him, “Yes, Lord, I have believed [and still do] that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

“She is saying to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, I have believed [and still do] that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’”

Now it’s interesting. She says, “Lord, I have believed”—that’s PERFECT TENSE in the Greek—“[and still do].”

That’s kind of like the guy that’d been married to his wife for twenty-five years and he was having some problems and they went to see a marriage counselor. The marriage counselor asks, “Do you love your wife?” He says, “Yes, I sure do.” He then asks, “Well, do you ever tell her?” The husband replies, “Well, I did twenty-five years ago and that still stands unless I revoke it.”

In essence that’s what Martha is saying here. It’s PERFECT TENSE:

“I have believed [and I still do] that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

Now notice something about that which is very interesting. She knew who He was, but she didn’t know what He could do with regard to this present circumstance. She recognized Him as who He was, but she didn’t have any experience of what He could do or any awareness of what He was about to do here.

v. 28 And having said this she went off and secretly called Mary, her sister, saying, “The Teacher is here

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and is calling for you.”

“And having said this she went off and secretly called Mary, her sister, saying, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’”

Martha missed something here. Martha left the presence of the Lord before she should have.

The Lord probably had some more things to say to Martha, but she was in such a hurry to go get Mary that she assumed now that the Lord was here that He wanted to see Mary too, so she was going on a mission that she hadn't been sent on.

She's assuming that the Lord also wants to see Mary, and she breaks the conversation right at the crucial point when the Lord wanted to say some more things to her that would comfort her, sustain her, increase her faith, and deal with her problem.

We often rush into the presence of the Lord. We have just a minute so it's a chapter a day to keep the devil away. Offer a couple of prayers and away we go!

We often don't ever give the Lord a chance to speak! It's a one-way conversation. We fill His ears with all our petitions and burdens and thanksgivings and then we're gone!

Here's a great statement:

(Streams in the Desert by L.B. Cowman)

“God is ever calling to the depths within us, but too often we’re too shallow to respond.” (source unknown)

God wants to meet with us and He wants to sustain us and comfort us. If we’d only just give Him time to talk to us.

Thinking about Noah in Genesis 8 we read that neat verse that says, “God remembered Noah.” (ref. Genesis 8:1)

It’s really a great comfort to know that the Lord knew where he was and He knew what Noah was doing, and in His time He was going to remember him and get him off that boat.

And then we read in Genesis 9, “God blessed Noah.” (ref. Genesis 9:1).

Genesis 8, “God remembered Noah.”

Genesis 9, “God blessed him.”

Now we see the dialogue and the fellowship with the Lord, just by waiting in His presence with our needs and our burdens and concerns. He took the word there and in two statements that wouldn’t mean anything to us and we’d just pass over, and used it in our life to meet a very specific need.

With Martha it was the same thing. The Lord wanted further opportunity to speak with her, but she was in such a hurry she went on a mission for which she hadn’t been sent. And she

assumes the fact the Lord wants to see Mary, so she goes trucking to the house and gets Mary.

Now Mary, in verse 29, comes into the picture. Martha is done now. Let's see Mary—the second character.

III. JESUS WITH MARY—verses 29-37

v. 29 Now as soon as she heard, she arises at once and went to Him.

“Now as soon as she heard, she arises at once and went to Him.”

Look how quickly she is obedient. As soon as she hears, she goes.

Mary is a different person than Martha. A lot different. She has different needs and so the Lord's going to deal with her in a different way.

Mary was a very tender person, very quiet, probably melancholy in temperament in the sense that she radiated and exuded the fragrance of Jesus Christ to those who were around her. Not so much by what she said, but by what she was.

We see her **THREE TIMES** in the Bible and all three times are instructive, because she's at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

1. In Luke 10 she's at His feet LISTENING to His Word.
2. In John 11 she's at His feet WEEPING in the loss of a brother.
3. In John 12 she's at His feet WORSHIPPING as she breaks this precious ointment and anoints His feet and wipes it with her hair.

This is instructive too, because whenever a day goes by and we're not found at His feet listening to His Word, it's going to affect our day. Whenever we go through a trauma, don't make the mistake of running away. Go to His feet to weep.

Before we consult a friend, before we go into the presence of anybody else, as soon as the sting hurts, run into His presence and be alone with His Word. Because when we weep with a broken heart at His feet, He's going to begin to give us the perspective that He wants us to learn through the experience that we've just gone through.

It's always safe, when we're going through sorrow, to get into His presence as quickly as possible.

And third, blessed be His name, may He often find us there at His feet worshipping Him. Expressing our love and adoration for who He is and for what He's done for us.

Now a lot of people say, "Well, what do you think about Mary and Martha? Do you think Martha's going to get second best

to Mary when they get to glory? Is Martha going to be in the same place that Mary is and is she going to receive the same number of rewards?”

Something that many might not agree with, but it’s scriptural that Mary is probably going to receive a greater reward. Not in the sense that she’s going to be put in a better palace or something like that, but Mary, because her priorities were straight, grew a lot more in a relationship with the Lord than Martha ever did. Simply because Martha did not organize her schedule to put first things first, and Mary did.

Mary was in the presence of the Lord, found in the right place at the right time. And when she gets to glory, there is going to be a reward for Mary that Martha is not eligible for and that Martha missed while she was here because she was such a busy person, serving the Lord instead of doing first things first, and that’s being with Him.

v. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha met Him.

“Now Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha met Him.”

So we see that Martha really whipped home. The Lord didn’t even get a chance to leave from where He was. Martha made a quick trip and said, “Mary, Mary, come on quick. You know He’s here.” And Mary hustled right there in obedience and He was still in the same place.

v. 31 Therefore the Jews, those who were with her in the house and who were comforting her, having seen Mary, that she had arisen quickly and gone out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb in order that she might weep there.

“Therefore the Jews, those who were with her in the house and who were comforting her, having seen Mary, that she had arisen quickly and gone out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb in order that she might weep there.”

v. 32 Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was, having seen Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

“Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was, having seen Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’”

That’s the only statement Mary ever makes in the Bible. And that statement is made by a broken heart. From a heart that is exhausted from the shedding of tears that almost feels like she’s a dry well.

It’s coming from somebody that deeply loves the Lord Jesus and has been disappointed.

We’re probably all wondering why Mary said the same thing

Martha did. Most likely the reason that she said the same thing that Martha did is because all through these days, just before Lazarus died, they were probably saying, “Oh, I know Jesus is going to get here and he’s not going to die.”

And from their point of view, all they could see is that physical death, on the basis of the word which they had received, could not take place, because He was going to come. And then as soon as he died, they started this little chorus right here:

“Oh, if You had only been here, he wouldn’t have died. If You’d only been here, he wouldn’t have died.”

And all through the funeral they said, “If You had only been here, he wouldn’t have died.”

And now four days later and here He comes and she just expresses from a broken heart the fact that she can’t understand that he’s gone. “If You would have only been here, he wouldn’t have died.”

Sometimes we have a very limited perspective when it comes to life. And it’s awfully easy for us to become critical and judgmental of God because of isolated incidents in our lives. And we don’t have the big picture.

Mary doesn’t have the big picture here. Mary doesn’t understand what the Lord’s trying to do in permitting this trauma to take place in their lives at this time.

v. 33 Then Jesus, when He saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled himself.

“Then Jesus, when He saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled within himself.”

That tells us that when something happens to us, as a Christian, it also hurts the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 1:24 says that “we fill up the sufferings of Christ.”

And when we as a Christian suffer, the Lord Jesus is still hurt by it. When we read Acts 9, for instance, Saul is confronted on the road to Damascus, what does the Lord say to Saul? He says, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

How is Saul persecuting the Lord? He’s eating Christians’ lunch. He’s driving them out of their houses. He’s getting them stoned. He’s taking their lives.

The Lord says, “That’s like you’re hurting Me. You’re persecuting Me for what you’re doing to those Christians.”

And the Lord is hurt badly inside at this particular point, and He expresses it here. And the question that comes to mind is:

What is the Lord Jesus going to do with a woman who needs sympathy, who needs comfort, who needs understanding? A

woman who's really tried to put the Lord first and has spent time with Him? Now look at what she's going through. How's the Lord going to handle her?"

Well, he has this internal hurt. First Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your care upon him for he cares for you."

The hymn writer said it so well:

Does Jesus care when I've said goodbye
to the dearest on earth to me?
And my sad heart aches until it nearly breaks,
is it ought to Him, does He see?
(source unknown)

And then the hymn writer comes back and says:

Oh yes He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief.
And the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares.
(source unknown)

The Lord Jesus doesn't say very much here, but His presence there with her is enough. And many times that's all that is necessary. When wounded hearts are around, just our presence is enough.

v. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They are saying to Him, "Lord come and see."

“And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They are saying to Him, ‘Lord come and see.’”

The first thing the Lord does is to try to take the sting of this internal hurt off of seeing Mary in this situation, and He raises the question:

“Where is he?”

And then verse 35 says:

v. 35 Jesus wept.

“Jesus wept.”

Whereas INTERNALLY He was grieved in verse 33, EXTERNALLY He manifests that grief by tears in His eyes.

A lot of people think that’s really phony. Most likely they weren’t legitimate tears, because Jesus knew what He was going to do.

All we know is that Jesus had a broken heart over people who resisted Him. Jesus had a broken heart when He came around and looked at the city of Jerusalem with tears in His eyes and He said, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen would gather her chickens, but you would not.” (ref. Matthew 23:37)

We read, “He had compassion upon those who fainted without

a shepherd.” (ref. Matthew 9:36)

He was concerned for the lost multitude. With tears in His eyes and anguish in His heart, He prepares to go to the place where Lazarus is laying and He identifies with Mary in her deepest need.

There are TWO THINGS we see in these verses in His contact with Mary:

1. He feels WITH US and
2. He feels FOR US.

He’s concerned about us. He’s careful to identify with us in our deepest need.

v. 36 Then the Jews were saying, “Behold, how He was loving him.”

“Then the Jews were saying, ‘Behold, how He was loving him.’”

v. 37 But certain ones of them said, “Was not this man able, who opened the eyes of the blind, to have caused that even this one should not die?”

“But certain ones of them said, ‘Was not this man able, who opened the eyes of the blind, to have caused that even this one should not die?’”

We have accord again. They're saying the same thing. He says, "This is a hopeless situation. He could open blind eyes and He could do all these other cool things, but couldn't He have kept this guy from dying?"

And now the fact that He's died, even the Jews are saying there's no hope. It's all over. It's like the two girls looked at it that way.

There's just a hopeless pause over the whole situation. The Lord Jesus can't do a thing about it. And He's hurting inside and tears are coming down His cheeks as He heads toward that tomb.

Whenever we have walked toward a funeral home when we know a loved one is there, or we've walked into the presence of death and felt that horrible, empty feeling in the pit of your stomach, we know a little bit about how the Lord felt as He began to approach this tomb.

The Lord Jesus not only expressed this internally and externally, but the agony of His heart as He goes to this place of this friend whom He has really loved and identified with, we're going to see the trauma of what happens.

The conversation now shifts and the Lord Jesus doesn't make a defense against these Jews. He moves into action.

IV. JESUS WITH LAZARUS—verses 38-44

v. 38 Then Jesus, again moved deeply in himself, is coming to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying upon it.

“Then Jesus, again moved deeply in himself,”—hurt inside—“is coming to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying on it.”

He just kind of gives us a little bit of background to describe the tomb here. And they put a rock over it to keep the wild animals out.

v. 39 Jesus is saying, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the one who had died, is saying to Him, “Lord, by this time the smell must be offensive, for it is four days.”

“Jesus is saying, ‘Remove the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the one who had died, is saying to Him, ‘Lord, by this time the smell must be offensive, for it is four days.’”

Jesus gives the COMMAND because He’s about ready to bless Martha with what she wants more than anything else in the world. That’s to have her brother back again. But she’s about to become her own worst enemy, because she’s standing in the way of what the Lord wants her to do.

In her mind and in her heart, she’s saying, “Lord, You know You’ve blown it once. Don’t do it again. It’s bad enough that

You didn't get here before he died, but now that You're here, don't embarrass the memory of him by opening the tomb because it's going to be a smelly situation. Don't do it."

She's trying to stay out of the way of something that the Lord wants to do.

How long does it take some of us to ever catch on to how we need to cooperate with what the Lord's trying to do in our lives? We resist, we rebel, we don't understand what He's doing. The Lord just wants a patient individual, waiting to bless them, if they'd just let Him.

That reminds us of Habakkuk in the Old Testament. Habakkuk says, "Lord, You aren't doing anything." Then the Lord says, "Yes I am."

Habakkuk says, "Now I don't like what You're doing." Finally, in the last part of chapter 3, old Habakkuk says, "I don't care if there's no fig trees, I don't care if there's no herd in the stalls, and the crops all fail, I don't care! I'm going to joy and rejoice in the God of my salvation."

And the Lord said, "I'm going to let you handle it. It's your deal."

And that's really what Martha needed to learn here. To be dependent on the Lord, knowing what was best for her and to rest in that.

Now she gets a stern rebuke from the Lord in verse 40.

**v. 40 Jesus is saying to her, “Did I not say to you, that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?”
Then they removed the stone.**

“The Lord said, ‘Did I not say to you, that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?’”

“Patience Martha! You’ll see the glory of God in this difficult situation. Don’t try to miss it by interfering in what I’m trying to do.”

Something we learn from this particular verse is that the Lord does things in our lives over our protests and in a different way than we have planned, but only to accomplish the maximum glory for Himself through the situation.

“Then they removed the stone.”

**v. 41 And Jesus lifted up His eyes above, and said,
“Father, I thank you because you heard me.**

“And Jesus lifted up His eyes above, and said, “Father, I thank you because you heard me.”

That’s just like the champion moving into battle here against life’s greatest foe. Everybody thinks there isn’t a chance here. He moves in kind of like old Elijah in 1 Kings 18:37 when he’s at that Carmel Convention and all the prophets of Baal have

been whooping it up all day and couldn't get any fire.

Elijah moves in and he says, "Hear me now, Oh Lord, hear that these people might know that You're the Lord God and You have turned their hearts back again," and the fire of the Lord fell.

It just came right down in answer to his prayer. And that's what happens here as the Lord Jesus advances toward the tomb. He's a champion that's going to do battle. Tears in His eyes and anguish in His heart, He's going to fight the greatest enemy of humankind—physical death.

v. 42 Now I know that you are always hearing me but on account of the crowd which is standing around I spoke, in order that they might believe that you sent me."

"Now I know that you are always hearing me"

The Father's ears are sensitive to the words of the Son.

"but on account of the crowd which is standing around I spoke in order that they might believe that you sent me."

There's quite a crowd who are going to witness this miracle.

v. 43 And having said these things He shouted with a great voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

“And having said these things He shouted with a great voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’”

Now notice something about that verse. Notice that it’s a **COMMAND**.

It’s the Lord Jesus giving a command to a dead person saying, “Lazarus, come out!”

First Thessalonians 4 comes to mind, where it described the great snatch of all of the believers. It says, “And the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout.” What’s that shout? “Come forth!” (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

This same powerful voice is the voice that said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

It’s the same voice that said, “Peace be still,” and there was a calm on a raging sea.

And now this voice says, “Lazarus, come forth!” and the dead respond. There is a **RESURRECTION** that takes place.

Thankfully He said, “Lazarus, come forth!” at this particular point. If He would have said, “Come forth!” we would have had the rapture or the resurrection.

There’s only one guy that’s going to be involved. The cemetery would have been emptied if He hadn’t said “Lazarus.” There’s only one guy that’s going to come forth to show that Christ is

victorious over death, and so He calls Lazarus by name.
“Come forth!”

Now what’s going to happen?

v. 44 The one who had died came out, his feet and hands bound with bandages; and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus is saying to them, “Unloose him, and permit him to depart.”

“The one who had died came out, his feet and hands bound with bandages; and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus is saying to them, ‘Unloose him, and permit him to depart.’”

1. His greatest need was for LIFE, and the Lord Jesus gave it to him.
2. He needed LIBERTY, and the Lord commanded that they “Unloose him, and permit him to depart.”

Remember when He said to the woman, “Neither do I condemn you”? He gave her FORGIVENESS.

“Go your way”—He gave her FREEDOM, and

“Sin no more”—He gave her a FUTURE.

He gave Lazarus LIFE, which was his greatest need.

He gave him FREEDOM—“Unloose him, and permit him to

depart.”

The Bible says that if we’re not a Christian, we’re dead in trespasses and sin. And just like dead Lazarus, we need to be made alive with the life of God. And that only comes when a person expresses his faith in the Lord Jesus and comes into this relationship with Him.

When he invites the Lord Jesus to come into his heart and life the Bible says he’s been born again, like we saw back in chapter 3. He has this new life from above.

We’ve seen three people in our passage:

MARTHA—“Can you trust Me in the midst of the crisis? That I know what I’m doing and can you apply your belief in Me to the present circumstances that are before you? Martha, I’m handling the situation. I’m capable of handling it. Will you trust Me?”

MARY—“I love you. My heart is broken for you. Internally and externally, I express My grief and My hurt over your loss. I care for you like a mother cares for a little babe that’s in the next room. In hearing the faintest cry, to respond to meet your needs. Mary, I love you and all these things are working together for good, although you don’t understand it right now at this particular point.”

LAZARUS—“You’re dead. And your greatest need is for life and liberty, and I give them both to you as a gift on this

occasion.”

The Lord Jesus is seen so beautifully here, meeting the needs of these people. We can make a safe assumption, and that is He wants to meet the very same needs in our life.

If there’s someone who is a Martha and they’re having a tough time trusting Him, turn it over to Him.

If there’s someone who is a Mary and they’ve been in fellowship with the Lord, but their world’s falling apart and they’re hurting pretty badly, just know He’s hurting too. He loves them and He wants to comfort them. He’s promised them His presence.

And if someone is a Lazarus, and they’re dead spiritually, He wants to give them the gift of life.

“Lo, now is the accepted time. Lo, now is the day of salvation.” (ref. 2 Corinthians 6:2)

“Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth.” (ref. Proverbs 27:1)

We have the following lessons that come out of our passage:

Lesson #1: Can you trust God with your present circumstances?

Lesson #2: Jesus really does care about you and what is happening in your life.

Lesson #3: The Lord is saying, “I Love You and all of this is part of my plan for good. . . .”

Lesson #4: The Lord is waiting to meet your needs.

Lesson #5: It is never a question of ability but timing.

Lesson #6: Can you trust Him and His promises when all the evidence is contrary?

Lesson #7: We must learn never to be critical of God with our limited perspective.

Lesson #8: It is one thing to apprehend and another to appropriate.

Our heavenly Father, as we pause at the conclusion of this study, we thank You for this precious passage that's brought tears to our eyes. But it's also brought laughter into our voices as we've been able to identify with what's gone on. Thank You for the anticipation of the future when we're going to be with You forever. Now Lord, we pray that as we go our way, we'll have a deeper appreciation of how the Lord Jesus is able to move into each life and to deal with each personality and to meet each need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Six – The Raising of Lazarus – John 11:17-44

Key Verse 11:25

I. THE SETTING—verses 17-19

v. 17 Then Jesus having come found that he had been already four days in the tomb.

v. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles.

v. 19 Now many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, in order that they might comfort them concerning their brother.

II. JESUS WITH MARTHA—verses 20-28

v. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went out to meet Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

v. 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

v. 22 And now I am knowing that whatever you may ask God, God will give it to you.”

v. 23 Jesus is saying to her, “Your brother will arise.”

v. 24 Martha is saying to Him, I am knowing that he will arise in the resurrection on the last day.”

v. 25 Jesus said to her, “I myself am the resurrection and the life; the one who is believing in me, even if he die, shall live.

v. 26 And everyone who is living and believing in me shall positively never die (shall by no means die into the ages). Are you believing this?

NOTES

v. 27 She is saying to Him, “Yes, Lord, I have believed [and still do] that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

v. 28 And having said this she went off and secretly called Mary, her sister, saying, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”

III. JESUS WITH MARY—verses 29-37

v. 29 Now as soon as she heard, she arises at once and went to Him.

v. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha met Him.

v. 31 Therefore the Jews, those who were with her in the house and who were comforting her, having seen Mary, that she had arisen quickly and gone out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb in order that she might weep there.

v. 32 Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was, having seen Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

v. 33 Then Jesus, when He saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled himself.

v. 34 And He said, “Where have you laid him?” They are saying to Him, “Lord come and see.”

v. 35 Jesus wept.

v. 36 Then the Jews were saying, “Behold, how He was loving him.”

v. 37 But certain ones of them said, “Was not this man able, who opened the eyes of the blind, to have caused that even this one should not die?”

IV. JESUS WITH LAZARUS—verses 38-44

v. 38 Then Jesus, again moved deeply in himself, is coming to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying upon it.

v. 39 Jesus is saying, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the one who had died, is saying to Him, “Lord, by this time the smell must be offensive, for it is four days.”

v. 40 Jesus is saying to her, “Did I not say to you, that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?” Then they removed the stone.

NOTES

v. 41 And Jesus lifted up His eyes above, and said, "Father, I thank you because you heard me.

v. 42 Now I know that you are always hearing me but on account of the crowd which is standing around I spoke, in order that they might believe that you sent me."

v. 43 And having said these things He shouted with a great voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

v. 44 The one who had died came out, his feet and hands bound with bandages; and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus is saying to them, "Unloose him, and permit him to depart."

QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 11:17-44 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What promise does Jesus give to Martha in verse 23?

3. How does Martha look on this promise that has been given, according to verse 24?

4. What promise does Jesus make in verses 25 & 26?

5. How does Jesus respond to Mary's weeping in verses 33-35?

6. What do the Jews say about the fact that Jesus is weeping, according to verses 36 & 37?

7. What preparations are made before Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead?

8. How does Jesus respond to Martha's opposition to removing the stone, according to verse 40?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Can you trust God with your present circumstances?

LESSON #2: Jesus really does care about you and what is happening in your life.

LESSON #3: The Lord is saying, "I Love You and all of this is part of my plan for good. . . ."

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:
