Who Is Jesus
Part Fifteen / Wednesday, April 3, 2019
THE WALKING DEAD

Pictured above is the opening to Lazarus’ tomb in Bethany, Israel - about 1 mile east of the walls of Jerusalem.

John 11:38-44

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. [39] Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. [40] Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? [41] Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. [42] And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. [43] And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. [44] And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graverclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.
Years ago, while still living in Missouri, I took flying lessons. On the last lesson before I was to solo, it became very apparent to me that I did not know how to land the plane - every time I came around. I didn’t need my instructor to tell me that. On those eleven passes around the airport, I landed the plane properly eight times. Three times I did not. Those three bad landings were enough to tell me to take the plane back to the hangar, climb out, hand the keys to my instructor, get in my car and go home. And...don’t come back.

Why bring this up? Because many religions promise a good life on earth, but nothing beyond. Isn’t that similar to taking up an airplane without absolute assurance of bringing it down safely? The Gospel of Jesus Christ takes us well beyond life on earth; it ushers us safely into eternity.

Three times in Scripture we read of Jesus raising someone from the dead:

✓ a 12 year old girl who had just died (Jairus’ daughter) Mark 5:35-42

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? [36] As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. [37] And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. [38] And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. [39] And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. [40] And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. [41] And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. [42] And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

✓ In the little town of Nain, Jesus raised a young man to life:

Luke 7:11-15

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. [12] Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. [13] And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. [14] And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. [15] And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.
And then we have our story tonight, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now I have listed the three we know Jesus raised alive from the grave but - hang on! - they were not resurrected! Yes, they were raised from the dead, but they were not technically resurrected. Note Paul's definition of resurrection: 1 Cor. 15:42-44 **So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: [43] It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: [44] It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.** None of the three I listed who were raised from death were raised to glory, or had a new life such as Jesus when He came out of the grave after three days. All three of those mentioned later died on this earth and were buried. Jesus did NOT die again, but ascended into Heaven: Acts 1:9-11 **And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.**

**COULD JESUS ARRIVED IN BETHANY IN TIME TO HEAL LAZARUS?**

Of course, but He needn't have hurried at all. He could have spoken a healing word for Lazarus from the moon and delivered him from this life-taking disease. But he chose not to. He got the word that His friend might not live:

John 11:3-4

Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. [4] When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

I have sometimes heard professing believers DEMAND that Jesus do this or that. Listen, your Lord Christ is not a Western Union boy! When did He become our servants? Jesus was quite far away, miles-wise, when He received word that His friend was very ill.

I have also heard from some sources that Christian will NEVER be sick - and, if they are, it's because they don't have faith. Or - this old aside, "Must have sin in their lives."

And we would know that...how? The mighty King Solomon settled that issue long ago when he wrote: Eccles. 9:1 **For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.** Sickness is not a sign that God does not love you. You and I have no right to judge anyone.
Not only did Jesus not go running immediately to Bethany when He received word about His friend’s illness, He stayed put two more days: John 11:5-6  
*Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*  
[6] When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days **still in the same place where he was.**

My goodness - Jesus didn’t head for Lazarus right away, yet Scripture declares that our Lord loved His friend.  
Jesus loves a person when he or she is sick, loves that one even when tragedy strikes, when loss is felt.  
Listen....Jesus loves you even if you don’t believe in Him.  
He still attempt to reach your heart while you heart can still be reached!

Jesus declared - though I doubt many understood what He was saying at the time - that Lazarus’ sickness was temporary.  
The Father God would get great glory from the situation - and that was the main issue.

Did you notice in verse 5 that it is stipulated that Jesus loved Martha, as well.  
Many of us preachers are very hard on her.  
She was “cumbered about with much serving.”  
At the time she did not have her eyes and heart set on “the best thing,” which was worshiping at our Lord’s feet.  
**BUT THAT DID NOT KEEP JESUS FROM LOVING HER.**

When Jesus finally did decide to head toward Jerusalem, His disciples warned Him not to go: John 11:8  
*His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?*  
Apparently Jesus had been attacked or ambushed in that area before and His men didn’t want Him to go back.  
But Jesus reprimanded them, saying, John 11:9-10  
*Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day, and during every hour of it a man can walk safely and not stumble. [10] Only at night is there danger of a wrong step, because of the dark."*  
The western film star John Wayne would have said it like this: “We’re burnin’ daylight!”

I wonder if Jesus’ disciples wondered if Jesus really understood the situation.  
But He clarified that in the next verses:  
John 11:11-15  
*These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*  
[12] Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.  
[13] Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.  
[14] Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.  
[15] And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

Jesus put it to them so plainly that no one could misunderstand, “Hey, guys – Lazarus is dead!  
Now let’s get up there!”
The Reaction of Thomas

Remember Thomas was the perpetual pessimist! John 11:16  Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

This is the same fellow who, after Jesus’ resurrection, told his fellow disciples that he wouldn’t believe Jesus was alive unless he could stick a finger in the nail prints in Jesus’ hands. However, after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Thomas became a firebrand. We know he traveled east and ended in India where he founded a list of strong Christian churches, especially in Chennai** (where we have an Assemblies of God church some 50,000 strong every Sunday) where he was martyred by a rabid Hindu who ran a spear into the disciple. Remember that Jesus had promised His disciples that they would receive POWER: Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

( ** Chennai was formerly known as Madras and is currently a city of over 7 million people. Once again severe persecution against Christians has hit India, with some of our leaders there imprisoned for a time.)

Jesus Goes To Lazarus’ Grave

John 11:17-19

Then when Jesus came, he found that he (Lazarus) had lain in the grave four days already. [18] Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs (2 miles from the Eastern Gate of the Holy City) off: [19] And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Bethany was a village located just over the ridge of the Mount of Olives. We note from Scripture that on several occasions Jesus visited Bethany where a friend of His, a man named Lazarus, lived with his two sisters, Mary and Martha. By the time our Lord reached the town, Lazarus’ home was crowded with sympathizers. So when Jesus found a crowd in the house at Bethany, He found what anyone would expect to find in a Jewish house of mourning. It was a sacred duty to come to express loving sympathy with the sorrowing friends and relations of one who had died. Visits of sympathy to the sick and sorrowing were an essential part of Jewish religion. As the mourners left the tomb, they turned and said, “Depart in peace,” and they never mentioned the name of the one who had died without invoking a blessing on it. John / Volume 2 / Barclay / Westminster Press / page 90
At the bottom of the winding stairs leading to Lazarus’ crypt, one comes to a “holding room” (pictured above). In side the circled area you find the opening to the short tunnel. One must crawl through it to get to the niche in the wall where Lazarus’ body had been placed. This holding area would most probably have been the area where Jesus stood and called out, “Lazarus, come forth!”

Martha

There are some clues in scripture that Martha may well have been older than her siblings, Lazarus and Mary. If that is true, then she probably owned the home in Bethany. Some early writers claimed Martha was he widow of Simon the Leper and on his death the house became hers. That is only conjecture. The two sisters were dissimilar in their reaction to Jesus. While both loved Him dearly, Mary clearly showed her feelings while Martha remained someone distant and kept busy with the house. Jesus loved the sisters and their brother, but He also found the house a place of rest and comfort. It is reasonable to conclude that the three siblings were affluent and doubtless important figures in the little community.

The first glimpse we have of Martha is that of one “given to hospitality,” for we read “she received Jesus into her house” (there again a hint that she was the owner). When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, “she met Him” and bade Him welcome. Even when there was death in the home, the energetic and practical Martha dried her eyes and went
out to meet the Lord, leaving Mary sitting in the house still weeping. Knowing Martha as we do, we can be assured of this fact, that whenever Jesus visited Martha's home she never had any reason to apologize for untidy rooms, a neglected household, or lack of necessary provisions. To her, home responsibilities were never a drudgery.

The Women Of The Bible / Lockyer / page 88/ Zondervan

However, it must be noted that Martha could be a complainer. John 11:20-26  Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. [21] Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. [22] But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. [23] Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. [24] Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. [25] Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: [26] And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?

Martha got up to go meet Jesus while Mary sat still in the house. (Vs. 20) There again is indication of the personalities of these two women - not wrong, just different.

Martha was a believer. She stated so flatly in verse 24. But she was not yet able to understand that Jesus Himself, the One standing before her at this sad moment in the family, WAS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

Now Mary expresses dismay over Jesus' late arrival: John 11:32  Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Now Jesus inquired where Lazarus was buried. We come to the shortest verse in scripture: John 11:35  Jesus wept. Just prior to that verse we read in verse 33 that Jesus groaned in His spirit.

Ashamed of Tears?

I have on occasion heard some Christians who claim we needn’t cry at the funeral of our loved ones. Listen - a little over 46 years ago, I watched pall bearers lift my father’s casket over his grave. And some well-wishers said, “Well, Dan, your father is much better off now than he was here.” I know that. But that information doesn’t take away the loss, does it? That doesn’t really ease all the grief and hurt.

My father was a huge fan of the ABC radio broadcast with C. M. Ward - one of the
greatest Christian broadcasts ever. Oh, how he loved that broadcast - and that speaker. But Dad passed away before Dr. Ward did - and he never knew, in this life, that his son would be named to succeed Ward at the world-wide radio microphone. My father never got to sit in this incredible church with all of you wonderful people - or to hear the fabulous music - or enjoy the Florida sun. So yes, even after all these years, I get teary-eyed on occasions in the loss of my dad.

I love this biblical passage: Psalm 30:5 \textit{Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.}

\begin{verbatim}
Ashamed of tears? This world of ours
   Might be as well ashamed of flowers;
Skies of their stars when night appears,
   As mortals be ashamed of tears.
For then, if ever, when we weep,
   We waken who have been asleep
And let the flood of feeling roll
   Across the desert of the soul
Ashamed of tears, when even He
   Knelt weeping in Gethsemane?
We never see God quite so clear
   As through the prism of a tear.
If purity we ever know,
   It is our tears that made us so;
And only they need blush with shame
   To whom emotion never came.
Jesus wept! 2 Kings 20:5 \textit{Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee.} And...joy comes in the morning.

Jesus wept for the grief of His friends, even though he knew in just a few moments Lazarus would emerge alive and well from the subterranean grave!

John 11:38-40
\textit{Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. [39] Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. [40] Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest}
believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

When Jesus ordered that the gravestone be taken away, the crowd must have groaned. The Jewish people did not embalm dead bodies (they anointed with some sort of herb, but it was not meant to keep the body from decay). Martha yet had no concept of her brother coming to life, but perhaps thought Jesus only wanted to see the face of His now departed friend. At that time, dead bodies were wrapped in linen, but the hands and feet were swathed in bandage-like wrappings and the head was wrapped separately. Martha plainly pointed out to Jesus that her brother had been dead four days and by now it would not be pleasant to look at him. It was a Jewish belief that the spirit of the departed hovered around the body for four days....but after four days the spirit finally left. And the face would no longer be recognizable.

Then Jesus spoke: “Lazarus! Come forth!” And the body stirred, moved even more, and swung off the stone ledge where it had been left. Lazarus was alive!

LOOSE HIM!

John 11:43-44

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

This was not only a fantastic physical miracle, it was also a spiritual one! Ephes. 2:1

And you hath he quickened (made alive!), who were dead in trespasses and sins;

When you and I are saved, born-again, regenerated by the power of God, we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. But many are still bound by the very sin that was killing them. Now they need to be loosed from the old ways of living, the ways that spawned death in their soul. We no longer need to be bound by the old grave clothes.

As A Result....

John 11:45-46

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. [46] But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

This miracle of raising Lazarus spawned a hurricane of emotions - both good and bad.

John 11:47-52 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and
said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. [48] If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. [49] And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, [50] Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. [51] And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; [52] And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The religious leaders cried out that their religious customs should not die! Instead, Jesus should die!

John 11:53-57

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. [54] Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. [55] And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. [56] Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? [57] Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

And now the scene is set for the Greatest Story Ever Told - that of the death and resurrection of Christ.