

Ninety-Nine And A Half Won't Do! Part 10 – Remove The Stone

Description

34 And He said, Where have you laid him? They said to Him, Lord, come and see.
35 Jesus wept.
36 The Jews said, See how [tenderly] He loved him!
37 But some of them said, Could not He Who opened a blind man's eyes have prevailed here?
38 Now Jesus, again sighing repeatedly and deeply disquieted, approached the tomb.
39 Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, exclaimed to Him, Lord, why do you trouble me? My brother is dead, and you know how long it has been.
40 Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you and promise you that if you would believe, you would have your brother alive? She said to Him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who are to come into the world.
41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You.
42 Yes, I know You always hear and listen to Me, but I have said this on account of the people who stand around me, that they may believe that You have sent Me.
43 When He had said this, He shouted with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!
44 And out walked the man who had been dead, his hands and feet wrapped in burial cloths.
45 Upon seeing what Jesus had done, many of the Jews who had come with Mary believed in Him.
46 But some of them went back to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done to Lazarus.

John 11:34-46 AMPC

The story of Jesus and Lazarus is a very loaded miracle in the Bible, that has some glaring gaps in the story. I love details, because they help to complete the big picture and provide much needed context. We haven't heard of Lazarus until this point in John, and we don't know Mary or Martha either. None of that is important really because the main point of this passage is, what do we do when Jesus shows up?

I want to focus in on the exchange that the Jesus has with Martha in the passage. Let's break it down to see how we go from 99.5 to 100

- v34 – Where have you laid him: This question is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden when God asked, "Adam, where are you?" Jesus, like God knew the answer to the question before he asked it, yet what he was really asking was, "will you tell me where you are, and/or where you stopped believing?"
- v38 – Jesus approaches the tomb: Jesus is willing to go anywhere to save and retrieve his own. Earlier in the gospels he explains that a good shepherd will leave the 99 to retrieve the 1 lost sheep. This passage is a testament to Jesus' commitment to his people in that he will deviate from his plans to visit those in need who believe in him. Mary and Martha called out, and Jesus responded.
- v39a – Take away the stone: Jesus had responded to Mary and Martha's call for help in the form of a miracle for their brother Lazarus prior to his death. Jesus shows up 4 days after Lazarus has died, and is standing outside the tomb/cave where Lazarus has been buried. Jesus has the power to remove the stone from the entrance, and he even has the power to speak a word that would travel through the stone and awake Lazarus from his sleep. Yet, Jesus doesn't do either of these things, he instead asks Martha and others who are mourning to remove the stone from the entrance. Jesus can do whatever he chooses, yet he will not usurp our responsibilities, which are to believe, and partner with him to bring about his will and plan for our lives. The fact that he stands outside the tomb/cave, and instructs them to remove the stone, is Jesus operating within

the order that he has established on Earth which requires us to exercise faith AND works.

- v39b- But Lord, the odor: This is a 99.5 statement. When Jesus instructs them to remove the stone from the entrance, rather than quickly moving with great faith, Martha chooses to respond with concern for the possible odor of Lazarus's body. How do you respond to the commands of God? Do you respond in faith, or only with natural eyes and perspective? Martha believes that Jesus is the Messiah, she believes in the resurrection, but she doesn't believe or realize that Jesus has the authority and power to resurrect Lazarus now.
- v40- if you believe, you will see the glory of God: Jesus leaves it open-ended with his question to Martha. Each of us must ask ourselves do we believe that we'll see the glory of God? Do you believe that the glory of God is reserved only for after death, or that you'll see God's glory in and through your life.
- v41-42; Jesus conversates with God in the open not for bragging, but rather to let us into his intimate relationship with God to show us the type of relationship that we would have with God through him. Though God knows our heart, and the desires of it; he knows our concerns, and even the things that we can't express, Jesus demonstrates the value of professing to God. I believe that we unlock a superpower within ourselves, and a new level to our personal relationship with God when we sometimes take that leap of faith to openly declare what we want to God.
- v43- he shouted, Lazarus, come out: I heard that the reason that Jesus directly addressed Lazarus in this passage is because other individuals who were laid to rest in that cave/tomb would have awoken at the voice of Jesus because his life-giving spirit was released when he said come out. Jesus is specific when he releases a word and blessing to us, and this passage clearly demonstrates the age-old song that goes, "what God has for me is for me." That word and miracle was specifically for Lazarus. However there is a later appointed time when Jesus will return and call for all those who have fallen asleep in Christ with respond to the call to, "COME OUT!"
- v44- free him of his burial wrappings and let him go: Jesus gave us a foundational principle with this verse because out walks a man who had fallen asleep in faith, who was still wrapped in burial clothes. Though Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, it was not his responsibility to loose Lazarus from that which had covered him in death. Jesus called the other believers, the community of faith to support Lazarus and assist him in his transition from death to life. This is actually a 99.5 to 100 moment within the larger narrative. For the community of believers, it is important for us to understand that we are called to share one another's burdens, encourage one another, and walk together. Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead, but he called the community to remove the rags and remnants associated with death, and cultivate him back to health in Christ.

After that breakdown, I want to make it clear that the 99.5 to 100 moment originally intended was found in v41 when Martha agreed to remove the stone. The .5 is the difference in taking Jesus to the tomb where we laid to rest that which we hoped and believed for, compared to removing the stone, hard heartedness, and doubt that prevents us from allowing Jesus to heal the areas that have been broken or hurt in our lives. Martha believed not only in the Jesus of salvation, and life after death, but also the Jesus who has an abundance of blessings for us in the present.

Reflection Time

What's behind the stone in your life? What do you follow and believe in Jesus for? Is Jesus Lord of

your life, or your insurance plan for death? I suggest that you take inventory of your life and ask God to reveal your tomb areas, and that you would yield to the Lord who has the desire and ability to speak life to your pain.

Category

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