

John 11:38-53 The Real Tomb Raider!

38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

38 Jesus was moved deeply (angrily disturbed) and came to the tomb. The tomb was discovered in the 1870s. If it is the one recognized today as the original tomb, it was hewn into the back wall of a cave. The church of St. Lazarus stands in front of the cave. The entrance from the cave side is sealed but a new entrance was made on from above, a hewn staircase that goes down to the tomb. The body would be wrapped in linen and laid on a shelf to decompose. A stone would be placed over the entrance so robbers and animals could not enter. After a year the bones would be gathered and placed in a limestone box.

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

39 The lady that confessed that even now she believed that God would give Jesus whatever He asked was now voicing some doubt (John 11:22). The reason the Jews believed the dead could not be revived after three days was that they believed the spirit of the dead person, seeing the decomposition of their body, would not want to reenter it. Did Martha really believe? Do we really believe God can do anything?

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

40 Actually, what Jesus said was, "*Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*" John 11:25b-26a (ESV) If you believe in Jesus, you have life. Having life is to see the glory of God. Jesus also said, "*Your brother will rise again.*" Martha is being challenged to believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). The disciples had the same challenge. We have the same challenge. If we believe, we will see the glory of God. We will have life. We will see the heart of God manifest in the world as we pray His kingdom into the earth. Have you seen the glory of God lately? Tell us!

41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

41,42 This was Jesus' prayer. Notice that He did not pray that Lazarus would be restored to life. It was a prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude for already being heard. It was also a prayer of revelation in that it revealed the reason why He prayed aloud, so those who heard would believe that the Father sent Him (John 20:31). Good thing Jesus named him or every grave on the planet would have opened!

Imagine the scene. Everyone is looking at each other in disbelief. (Person 1) "Can Jesus really do what Elijah and Elisha had done in Scripture" (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34-35)? (Person 2) "He said God heard His prayer? What does that mean?" And then Jesus *cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"* (Person 3) "What is He doing? Does He really expect Him to walk out of the tomb?"

43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

43,44 (Lazarus shuffles out of the tomb.) Fright, shock, disbelief, all kinds of emotions just swept over the crowd, but then it began to settle in. (Person 1) "Who can do such a thing? Who has authority to speak to the dead?" The words came back to Martha, "Even though he dies, yet shall He live. Do you believe this?" She certainly does now! Then exuberant joy was expressed in tears and laughter as they untied Lazarus in amazement. Someone might have said in awe, (Person 2 sniffing the toward the tomb and then toward Lazarus) "The grave still stinks but Lazarus does not!" And Lazarus might have responded, "You do not smell so bad yourself."

Then imagine the questions to Lazarus. (Person 3) "What did you see? What was it like to be dead?" (Person 1) "Did you see Abraham?" And on and on... I would have liked to ask a few of my own questions, wouldn't you? And then the celebration must have begun. People who thought they had no more tears were now crying tears of joy. It was a little foretaste of the day of Resurrection when all will rise at the voice of Jesus like the wind of the Spirit on the valley of bones (Ezekiel 37:9-10).

It was a picture of our transformation when Jesus calls us. Our soul was rotting and beginning to stink. Many people thought there was no hope for us. We heard him call our name, and then we came to life. We were still bound by some sins and habits, but Jesus commanded that we be set free. And we are!

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, 46 but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

45-48 "Let Him go on like this..." did they mean raising the dead and healing the incurable? Did they even realize what they were saying? There was a very real fear that the independence of the Jews would be revoked. The Jews were the only nation under Roman dominion that could worship their own God. They were also allowed to take care of most of their own internal affairs. Their "place" referred to the temple.

49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."

49,50 Caiaphas held the office of high priest for 18 years, which meant he was great at pleasing Rome. This probably had to do with money derived from the business within the temple. Many other high priests only served for a year before they were replaced. It was thought that those holding the office the high priest could at times unknowingly say things that had a different meaning, a deeper meaning than they meant even without realizing it. Caiaphas wanted Jesus out of the way, but for us it means we won't experience the second death because He perished in our place.

⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

51-53 Amazing is not it! “He is doing too many miracles, giving too many proofs. We have got to kill Him!” How hardhearted! How blind! Jesus was interfering with their agenda. They were determined to kill Him regardless of the proofs and the pleadings of Jesus for them see and consider.

Some people today are determined to kill Him in their conscience. They know what He says. They do not doubt He is God’s one and only, but they have another agenda. They do not want to bow the knee. They want to be their own god. He offers us life to the full (John 10:10), but many are deceived into thinking their way is better. Rebellion is so fixed in their heart that they murder Christ in their conscience. We have all been there at one time or another.

Questions:

Did Martha really believe? Do you? -

When have we seen the glory of God?

Why did Jesus pray out loud?

Have you seen any resurrections?

What can the grave clothes picture?

Why did they think they had to stop Jesus?

What was Caiaphas unwitting prophecy?