

THE DEATH OF LAZARUS AND ITS PURPOSES JOHN 11:01–16

Introduction

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. The death of Lazarus gave Jesus the opportunity to reveal Himself as the resurrection and the life. There were seven purposes for Lazarus' death. (Each purpose is also applicable to the death of the believer.)

- I Lazarus was sick (vv. 1-3).
- II Purpose 1: to glorify God and to proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 4).
- III Purpose 2: to show Jesus' great love (v. 5).
- IV Purpose 3: to show the necessity for waiting upon God in great crises (v. 6).
- V Purpose 4: to teach the need to grasp opportunity (vv. 7-10)
- VI Purpose 5: to show Jesus' great power over death (vv. 11-14).
- VII Purpose 6: to help strengthen the disciples' belief (v. 15).
- VIII Purpose 7: to stir the disciples' courage and loyalty (v. 16).

I. John 11:01–03 Jesus Christ and the Family of Martha

Lazarus was sick. Jesus had said, “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58). At this particular time Jesus was being rejected by almost everyone. Apparently He was an unwelcome guest in most homes. He was walking about preaching and proclaiming that He was the Messiah; He is One with God, that is, He is God Himself; He is the Son of God Himself; God is in Him and He is in God (10:22-42). Just imagine a man making such a claim. He was thought to be “mad” and demon-possessed (Mk. 3:20-21; Lk. 4:25). His own family was even having difficulty with Him at this time. They were apparently so embarrassed by His claims and the rumours of His insanity that on one occasion they travelled a great distance to bring Him home lest He be harmed. (Mt. 12:46-50.)

However, there was one family who always opened their home to Jesus when He was in and around Jerusalem — the family of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, who were brother and sisters. They lived in Bethany, a suburb about two miles outside Jerusalem. Their closeness to Jesus is the reason the sisters felt so free to interrupt His evangelistic tour with the request to help their sick brother. Jesus' great love for this family should be noted throughout this passage.

II. John 11:04 Sickness of Lazarus – to Glorify God

The first purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to glorify God and to proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God. Lazarus' sickness was not for death. He was to die for the glory of God and

Christ. He was sick, and he was to die so that the works of God could be demonstrated. Lazarus died so that....

God could be glorified...

- By showing His desire for man to have life
- By proving His power to give life
- By showing His approval of Christ by which He proved that He really did love the world enough to send His Son to save the world

Christ could be glorified...

- By having the opportunity to do the work of God
- By demonstrating God's power
- By showing compassion
- By strengthening the faith of believers
- By leading unbelievers to believe

In raising Lazarus from the dead, both Jesus and His Father were glorified as the *Life* of the world. In dealing with the blind man, both were glorified as the *Light* of the world. If man wishes to be delivered from darkness, he must come to Christ. Christ is the only One who gives sight to man and His world. (Jn. 9:3, 5).

John 5:23 That all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him.

Psa 29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.

Psa 34:3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

Psa 71:8 My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendour all day long.

Psa 145:5 They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

Isa 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

III. *John 11:05 Jesus' Great Love for Man*

The second purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to show Jesus' great love. Note: each member of the family is mentioned personally. He loved the family, but He also loved each one individually. This is a fact in the Scripture that needs to be stressed, for each one had a need, and each one needed and received the help of Jesus. Lazarus' death gave Him the opportunity to demonstrate His great love not only for the families of the world but for each individual in the world.

John 10:3 “The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

IV. John 11:06 Necessity of Waiting Upon God during Trials

The third purpose of Lazarus’ sickness was to show the necessity for waiting upon God in great crises. Jesus was not waiting two days so that Lazarus would die and He could perform a great miracle. Jesus knew that Lazarus was either already dead or that Lazarus was going to die on the very day the person brought word of Lazarus’ illness. We know this because Lazarus had already been buried four days when Jesus arrived in Bethany (v. 17, 39). Jewish burial immediately followed death. The four days would be counted from...

- the day of travel by the messengers in bringing word to Jesus (v. 3).
- the two days needed for Jesus to complete His ministry (v. 6)
- the day or two needed by Jesus to travel to Bethany (v. 17). (Remember huge crowds thronged Jesus, which prevented Him from travelling rapidly. It is possible He completed His ministry in one day and took two days for travel to Bethany.)

The point is this: Martha and Mary were learning to wait upon God throughout the whole experience. In facing severe illness or death, there is no answer but to wait upon God. Jesus knows when to act. He knows the exact moment, the best time...

- for us to bear the trial
- for us to stand
- for us to be helped
- for us to learn the most
- for us to bear testimony of God’s power and strength

Whenever that moment arrives, the Lord arises to meet the need of the believer. What the believer must do is what Martha and Mary had to do: learn to wait upon God. The Lord will act at the right moment.

Thought 1. We cannot dictate to God when to act nor how to act. Note two events.

- (1) Mary, Jesus' own mother. At the marriage feast she wanted Him to go and secure more wine. He rebuked her for interfering with His work, the work of God. He has His own way and time, the very best way and time for meeting the need (Jn. 2:3-4)
- (2) Jesus' own brothers. They tried to ridicule Him into going by caravan with them to the feast in Jerusalem. Jesus rebuked them for the same reason He had rebuked Mary. He, the Son of God, knew how to conduct His ministry and when to go about doing it. He knew what was best.

Psa 25:5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psa 27:14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Psa 62:5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

Psa 123:2 As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy.

Prov 20:22 Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

Isa 40:31 But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Hosea 12:6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

V. John 11:07–10 Opportunity to do Service

The fourth purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to teach the need to grasp opportunity. It had been three days since Jesus had received word of Lazarus' illness. Jesus now said it was time to go into Judea, for Bethany was in the district of Judea. The disciples protested, for it was the Judean leaders who had stood so opposed to Jesus and had threatened to kill Him (Jn. 10:31). The disciples could not believe their ears. Why would Jesus jeopardize their lives?

Jesus' answer was forceful, and it stands as a great lesson for all of us. There are only twelve hours in a day. Jesus must walk, that is...

- go and do His work while it is day.
- go and do what is right, regardless of the danger.
- go and do what is right lest the day pass and the opportunity be lost. (Jn.9:4.)

If Jesus had walked in the dark, failing to work and failing to do what He knew to be right, He would have stumbled. He would have shown that there is no light in Him.

The idea is, of course, that there is light in Him. He knew the work to be done and the right thing to do, so He must go into Judea.

Thought 1. A man must do the same way as Jesus. A man has only twelve hours of daylight (approximately).

=> He must walk, that is, work and do what is right, grasping the opportunity while it is day.

=> If he walks in the night, he will stumble. When the night comes, it is too late to walk. Works cannot be done in the night without stumbling about. The opportunity is lost.

John 4:34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

John 9:4 *As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*

Rom 13:11-12 *And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.*

Eph 5:16 *Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

Col 4:5 *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

Note the term, “this world’s light”. Jesus is “the Light of this world”. A person has only twelve hours, only a certain amount of time to see “the Light of the world”. Once the night comes, the opportunity is lost. Note also the statement, “for he has no light [in him]”. Man has no light within. All he can do is walk...

- as he sees
- as other men see
- as the world sees

The problem with such a walk is that no man or any combination of men can see beyond the physical and material world, and the end of the world is fear - the fear and trembling brought about by bondage and death. (Note the fear of the disciples above, v. 8.) The end of the world is not life. Life comes only from Jesus, “the Light of the world.” (See *Light*, Jn. 8:12).

Mat 6:23 “But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

John 1:4 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

John 12:35 *Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.”*

John 12:46 *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”*

Eph 5:14 *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

JOHN 08:12 JESUS THE LIGHT

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” **John 08:12**

Jesus is said to be the *Light of men* (Jn. 1:4) and the *Light of the world* (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). It is possible for the Light, Jesus Himself, to be *in men* (Jn. 11:10; see Col. 1:27) and for men to become children of Light (Jn. 12:34-36).

Apparently, Jesus used the word *light* often. John uses the word twenty-four times. What is meant by calling Jesus the Light?

1. Jesus, the Light, is light by nature. Light is what He is within Himself, within His being. His nature, His essence, His character. Scripture says...
 - that “God is Light” (1 Jn. 1:5);
 - that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15);
 - therefore, “Jesus is Light.” He is “the Light of the world.”
2. Jesus, the Light, tells us that He is holy, righteous and pure. Light is the symbol of purity and holiness. Light means the absence of darkness and blindness; it has no spots of darkness or blackness, nor of sin and shame.
3. Jesus, the Light, reveals. His light shows clearly the nature, the meaning and the destiny of all things. His light shines in, spots, opens up, identifies, illuminates and shows things as they really are. The light of Jesus Christ shows the truth about the world and man and God. The light of Jesus Christ reveals that He loves and cares for man and wants man to love and care for Him.
4. Jesus, the Light, guides. His light allows a man to walk out of darkness. Man no longer has to grope, grasp and stumble about trying to find his way through life. The path of life can now be clearly seen.
5. Jesus, the Light, does away with darkness and with chaos. His light routs, wipes out, strips away and erases the darkness. The empty chaos of creation was routed

by the light given by God (Gen. 1:3). Jesus Christ is the Light that can save man from chaos (Jn. 14:1, 17; 12:46; 16:33).

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the world at the great Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2). The very first ceremony of the Feast holds great significance for Jesus' claim. It was called "The Illumination of the Temple" and was held in the Court of the Women. The centre of the Court was surrounded by large sections of stadium-like seats. In the open space of the Court sat four huge candelabra. When darkness fell the candelabra were lit, and the elders danced and led the people in singing psalms before the Lord all night. The brilliance and glow from the burning flames of the huge candelabra were said to be so bright that the light could be seen throughout the whole city. It was against this background that Jesus cried out, "I am the Light of the world." □

VI. *John 11: 11–14 The Great Power of Jesus Over Death*

The fifth purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to show Jesus' great power over death. Jesus stated very plainly what He was going to do. Lazarus was asleep; therefore, He would go and awaken Lazarus out of his sleep. However, the disciples misunderstood what Jesus was saying. *By sleep*, Jesus meant that Lazarus was dead, but the disciples thought He meant that Lazarus was resting in sleep. Note that Jesus gave His meaning of sleep: "Lazarus is dead." Note four significant things.

1. Jesus called Lazarus "our friend". He was dead, but he was still "our friend". This is a hint that Lazarus is still a friend despite being dead, that he is still living, still alive in another world. Note the strong feelings Jesus had for this believer, Lazarus.

Thought 1. Jesus' love reaches out to every believer just as much as it did for Lazarus. Jesus calls every believer His friend. And note the words: "our friend". Every believer is to be the friend of all other believers. There is to be a sweet fellowship between all believers.

2. Jesus predicted that He would raise Lazarus from the dead. He would "wake him up" and resurrect him. This is a picture of the resurrection of believers (vv. 23-26).

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."*

John 5:28-29 *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."*

3. The disciples misunderstood. Many still do. They misunderstand the meaning of death and the resurrection.
4. Jesus said that death is as "sleep".

JOHN 11:13 SLEEP – DEATH

Death is sometimes spoken of as sleep when referring to believers. (Lk. 8:50; Mt. 27:52; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:18, 20, 51; 1 Th. 4:13-15; 2 Pet. 3:4.)

=> Jesus said that Jairus' daughter was asleep

=> When Stephen was martyred, he is said to have fallen asleep (Acts 7:60)

=> Some of the five hundred witnesses to Jesus' ascension are said to have "fallen asleep"

=> Believers already in heaven are said to be asleep in Jesus (1 Th. 4:13).

Death is called "sleep" in order to picture the idea that the believer is...

- resting in the presence and comfort of God.
- resting from the labour of his service on earth.
- resting and refreshing himself for a greater service for God.

Many within the world picture death as annihilation, as ceasing to exist. Scripture says it is not. Believers continue to exist, resting in the life and comfort of God. The body lays down and, so to speak, sleeps; but not the soul of man.

2 Cor 5:8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. □

VII. *John 11:15 Hope for Resurrection*

The sixth purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to help strengthen the disciples' belief. Jesus said an astonishing thing: He was rejoicing that He was not in Bethany when Lazarus was sick. Why? Jesus joyed over what was to happen. Lazarus was to be raised from the dead, which meant that every thoughtful believer, both then and in succeeding generations, would experience a great leap in faith.

Thought 1. The glorious event of Lazarus' resurrection stirs the heart of sincere seekers, for it pictures the most glorious hope of life possible. Jesus Christ has the power to give life and to raise the dead (Jn. 5:24-29; 1 Th. 4:13f; 1 Cor. 15:1-58). Any follower of Christ who truly experiences the scene of Lazarus' resurrection is bound....

- to take a great leap in faith
- to have his faith stirred to new heights
- to see his faith grow progressively

John 20:30-31 *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

VIII. *John 11:16* Courage and Loyalty of the Disciples

The seventh purpose of Lazarus' sickness was to stir the disciples' courage and loyalty. Note that Thomas took the lead here. He showed great courage and loyalty to Christ, a dynamic example for every believer. He demonstrated...

- a deep love for Christ, a love that was ready to die for Him.
- a willingness to stand and to die with his fellow believers in the Lord's work.
- a knowledge that to die for Christ is better than to live without Him.

John 16:27 "No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."

1 Pet 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. ■

JESUS AND MARTHA: A GROWTH IN FAITH

JOHN 11:17–27

Introduction

This passage is a dynamic conversation between Jesus and Martha. What happened caused a great growth in Martha's faith. A seeking heart and a study of the conversation will cause any believer's faith to grow significantly.

- I The scene was Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem about two miles away (vv. 17-20).
- II Martha's complaining, due to limited faith (vv. 21-22)
- III Martha's fundamental faith (vv. 23-24).
- IV Martha's declared faith (vv. 25-27).

I. *John 11:17–20 Compassion of Jesus Christ*

The scene was Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem about two miles away. When Jesus arrived, someone told Him that Lazarus had already been buried for four days. Jesus did not actually enter the city of Bethany. He apparently stayed on the outskirts of the city. Just why we are not told. Perhaps the multitude following Him was too large to crowd into the city, or perhaps He was simply avoiding those who were so bitterly opposed to Him. There was an enormous number of mourners who had come to comfort the family, and some of these were opposed to Jesus (v. 46).

Whatever the reason for remaining on the outskirts of the city, Jesus apparently sent a messenger to tell Martha that He had arrived (v. 28). As soon as she heard, she quietly left the house and ran out to meet Him. (v. 28 for what apparently happened with Martha as well as Mary.) Mary, however, remained at home.

Note the striking contrast between Martha and Mary, a contrast that is ever so characteristic. Martha was the woman of action and energy, the one brimming with initiative; therefore, she was the one who went out to meet Jesus. Mary was the contemplative and meditative one; therefore, she remained at home to receive the mourners (Lk. 10:38-42).

II. *John 11:21–22 The Complaining Faith of Martha*

Martha's complaining, was due to a limited faith in Jesus. Martha believed in Jesus. She even believed that Jesus could have healed Lazarus and kept him from dying. But Jesus had not come immediately when He was called; therefore, her brother was dead. Why did Jesus not come when He was called? Why did He not heal Lazarus even though she and the family loved Jesus so much and had done so much for Him? Why did He let Lazarus die?

The point is this: Martha did believe in Jesus, but her faith was a *complaining faith*. She did not believe to the point of *resting* in faith. She did not believe with an *unlimited and resting faith*. She was not entrusting the matter completely into the Lord's hands. She was

not yet convinced that what had happened was for the best. She trusted Jesus as her Saviour, but she questioned what had happened. She complained and even reproached Jesus.

A complaining, questioning faith is a *limited faith*. It is a faith that questions Jesus' Lordship...

- that questions if Jesus has done what is best
- that questions if Jesus knows what is best

It says to Jesus, "If you had been here, if you had acted differently, if you had done this or that, then this trial would not have happened." Note that Martha was convicted immediately for having complained and reproached Jesus. She blurted out:

"But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." (v. 22)

But note even here how her *limited* faith showed itself. She did not say, "Lord, I know that you can do anything you will." She said, "God will give you whatever you ask." She was still *limiting* Jesus to some level below God. She was not grasping that Jesus Himself was the Resurrection and the Life. She had a complaining, limited faith in Jesus.

Mat 8:26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Mat 14:31-32 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Mat 16:8-9 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?"

John 14:10 "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

III. *John 11:23–24 Martha's Fundamental Faith*

Martha's fundamental faith. Jesus made a striking declaration, "Your brother will rise again." He could have said it no clearer. Lazarus was to arise from the dead. Martha misunderstood. She thought Jesus meant that Lazarus would arise in the resurrection at the last day.

1. Note that Martha had a fundamental faith. She believed in the resurrection, one of the fundamentals of the faith. She believed what Jesus had taught, and He had been drilling the resurrection into His followers (Jn. 5:28-29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 12:48).
2. Martha's *fundamental* faith experienced disappointment. The promise of a future resurrection and reunion is not always a comfort. Her loved one was gone. There

was now no contact and no relationship with him, not on this earth. Everything about her life was now completely changed. Her household was radically different. She believed in the resurrection and believed in all the fundamentals of the faith, but the resurrection was so far in the future that it was of little comfort to her then.

The point is this: a *fundamental faith* is essential. A person must believe in the fundamentals of the faith, but a fundamental faith is short — it is not all there is to faith and to our life in Christ. It is not a living faith, not a faith that lives in the presence of Christ. And what is so desperately needed by man is what was needed by Martha: a living faith, a faith that is alive and vibrant, dynamic and moving, conscious and acting, communicating and fellowshiping. What is needed is the knowledge that Jesus, the very One who stands before us, is “the resurrection and the life.”

John 5:39 “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Mark 7:6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’”

2 Tim 3:5 Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

IV. John 11:25–27 Martha’s Declaration of Faith

Martha’s declared faith. Note three points.

1. Jesus’ great claim: “I Am the resurrection and the life.” Here is a critical fact: Jesus did not say that He gives the resurrection and life to man, but He is the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus, of course, does give the resurrection and life to believers; but His point is not this fact. His point is far more important. Jesus declared that He is the very being and essence, the very power and energy, of life. Therefore, He can...
 - give and sustain life as He wills
 - resurrect and restore life as He wills

This is a phenomenal claim. It means that man — in fact all of life — exists only by the will and power of Jesus. Being the power and energy of life, Jesus is the Source of all life. There is nothing existing apart from His will; therefore, if a dead person wishes to live, only Jesus can give him life. And if a living person does not wish to die, only Jesus can keep him from dying.

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 5:26 “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.”

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Rom 5:21 So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Tim 1:10 But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

2. Jesus’ great promise: believe, and two phenomenal things happen.
 - a. “He who believes *in me will live*, even though he dies [kan a pothanen].” He lives in the other world: in heaven, in the spiritual dimension of being, in the very presence of God Himself. The believer who has passed from this world is not someplace...
 - in a semi-conscious state
 - in a deep sleep, locked up in a compartment someplace
 - in space moving about and floating around on a fluffy cloud

The believer is fully alive: he lives in heaven, in the other world, in the very presence of God Himself. Another world exists just as this world exists. It is not a world that lies out in the future; it is a world that exists now — a spiritual world — a spiritual dimension — a world that the Bible calls heaven. It is the spiritual world and dimension where God and Christ and angels and all those who have gone on before now live.

The point is this: when a person *who has believed in Jesus* dies, he goes to live in heaven, in the spiritual world where God and Christ and the heavenly hosts live. *Hallelujah!* is the only word that can express the hope and joy that fills the soul of the true believer.

L.uke 9:30-31 Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendour, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem.

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

John 12:26 “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”

John 17:24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”

2 Cor 5:8 *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

Phil 1:23 *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*

- b. “Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” The idea is that the believer will never taste death, that is, never experience death. Quicker than the believer can blink an eye, he passes from this world into the next world. He is transported and transferred into heaven. The believer never loses a single moment of consciousness. One moment he is conscious and living in this world; the next moment he is conscious and present in the next world. There is only one difference. He is immediately made perfect: transformed, made much more conscious and aware, more knowledgeable and alive than ever before. (See *Deliverance from Death*, 2 Tim. 4:18; *Life in Christ*, John 1:4; *Life in Christ Jesus*, John 10:10; *Eternal Life*, John 17:2-3.)

John 3:15 *“That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 8:51 *“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*

Gal 6:8 *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

- c. Note a crucial point. Receiving eternal life is conditional: a person must believe. It is “who believes” and “whoever lives and believes” that lives and never dies. It is as Jesus asked Martha: “Do you believe this?” If a person believes Jesus, he never dies; he will live forever.
3. Martha’s great declaration. Martha believed, and she confessed and called Jesus “Lord” (See *Belief*, Jn. 2:24). She declared that she believed three things:

- a. That Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

John 4:25-26 *The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”*

John 7:29 *But I know him because I am from him and he sent me.*

- b. That Jesus is the Son of God (John the Baptist, Jn. 1:34; Peter, Mt. 16:16; Jesus, Jn. 11:41; 26:63f; John the Apostle, Jn. 20:31.)

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 12:45 *“When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.”*

- c. That Jesus is the One who was to be sent into the world by God (See *Jesus Christ, From Above*, Jn. 3:31).

John 8:29 *“The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

Thought 1. Knowing that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life means three things. It means...

- that Jesus is alive, living right before us in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is both *in us* and *all around us*. Our faith is living and alive and in constant communion and fellowship with Him.
- that our loved one is present with Jesus, no longer imperfect in mind and body, but perfect: more conscious, more aware, more alive than he was on earth. How do we know this? Jesus is alive in heaven, and “to be away from the body [is] to be at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8)
- that Jesus is alive, so the resurrection of our glorified bodies is assured (1 Cor. 15:1-58). ■

2 TIMOTHY 04:18 DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH: ETERNAL LIFE

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

2 Timothy 04:18

The phrase “will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” is a picture of God transporting Paul right through this world into the next world. It is the picture of time — of unbroken time. God preserves Paul right through time into eternity. In one moment of time, Paul is living in this world, conscious and aware; but within the same moment — in a split second — he is transported into God’s heavenly kingdom. That one moment of time happens quicker than the blinking of an eye (11/100 of a second). Just imagine! There is no loss of consciousness, no experience or awareness of death. One moment Paul is a citizen of this world, and within the same split moment he stands before the Lord as a citizen of His kingdom (2 Cor. 5:6-8). It is the beautiful picture of the believer never having to taste death. (See Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 2:9; cp. 2 Cor. 5:5-8.) □

JOHN 01:04 “IN CHRIST WAS LIFE”

“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.” **John 01:04**

The simple statement “in Christ was life” means at least three things.

1. Life is the quality and essence, the energy and power, the force and principle of being. Christ is life; He is...

- the very quality of life
- the very energy of life
- the very force of life
- the very essence of life
- the very power of life
- the very principle of life

Without Christ, there would be no life whatsoever. Life is in Him, within His very being. All things exist and have their being (life) in Him.

2. Life is purpose, meaning, and significance of being. Christ is life; He is...

- the very purpose of life.
- the very meaning of life.
- the very significance of life.

3. Life is perfection. Life is all that a man must be and possess in order to live perfectly. This is what is meant by life. Life is completeness of being, absolute satisfaction, the fullness of all good, and the possession of all good things. Life is perfect love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

Whatever life is and all that life is, is all in Jesus Christ. Even the legitimate cravings of man that are sometimes entangled with evil — such as power, fame and wealth — are all included in the life given by Jesus Christ. Those who partake of His life shall reign forever as kings and priests (Lk. 16:10-12). This is the very thing that is distinctive about life — it is eternal. It lasts forever and it is rewarding. It will eventually exalt the believer to the highest life and place and position. (Rev. 21:1f.)

Jesus Christ is the source of life: He is the way to life, and He is the truth of life. He is the very substance of life, its very being and energy (Jn. 5:26; 1 Jn. 1:2). □

JOHN 10:10 LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” **John 10:10***

Life is one of the great words of the Scriptures. The word *life* (zoe) and the verb *to live* or *to have life* (zen) have a depth of meaning.

1. Life is the energy, the force, the power of being.
2. Life is the opposite of perishing. It is deliverance from condemnation and death. It is the stopping or cessation of deterioration, decay, and corruption (Jn. 3:16; 5:24, 29; 10:28).
3. Life is *eternal* (aionios). It is forever. It is the very life of God Himself (Jn. 17:3). However, eternal life does not refer just to duration. Living forever would be a curse for some persons. The idea of eternal life is also quality, a certain kind of life, a life that consistently knows love, joy, peace, power, and responsibility .

4. Life is satisfaction (Jn. 6:35).
5. Life is security and enjoyment (Jn. 10:10).
6. Life is found only in God. God is the source and author of life, and it is God who has appointed Jesus Christ to bring life to man. Jesus Christ gives the very life of God Himself (Jn. 5:26; 6:27, 40; 10:28; 17:23).
7. Life has now been revealed. It has been unveiled and is clearly seen in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ shows man what life is (Jn. 1:4-5; 5:26; 1 Jn. 1:2).
8. Life only comes to a man by believing in Jesus Christ. A man outside Jesus Christ only exists. He merely has the existence of an animal. Real life is found only in God. This is to be expected and it is logically true, for God is the creator of life. As the creator of life, He alone knows what life really is and what it is supposed to be (Jn. 3:36; 5:24; 6:47). This is the reason He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world: to show men what life is. When a person looks at Jesus Christ, he sees exactly what life is, exactly what it involves (Gal. 5:22-23):
=> love => patience => faithfulness
=> joy => kindness => gentleness
=> peace => goodness => self-control □

JOHN 17:02–03 ETERNAL LIFE (AINIOS)

*“For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 03 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” **John 17:02-03***

Life, real life. It is the very life of God Himself. It is the very energy, force, being, essence, principle and power of life. It has more to do with quality and with what life really is than with duration. To live forever in the present world is not necessarily a good thing. The world and man’s body need changing. That changed life is found only in eternal life. The only being who can be said to be eternal is God. Therefore, life — supreme life — is found only in God. To possess eternal life is to know God. Once a person knows God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, that person has eternal life — he shall live forever. But more essential, the person has the supreme quality of life, the very life of God Himself.

***John 3:14-15** “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

***John 6:40** “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 11:25-28 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”*

John 12:25 *“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”*

Rom 5:21 *So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Gal 6:8 *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

2 Tim 1:10 *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*

1 Jn 5:11-12 *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. □*

JOHN 02:24

SAVING FAITH: BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just *believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the

Saviour just as A. J. Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.

2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man's total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man's commitment of all *he is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man's affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being, and possessions into Jesus' hands. He lays himself upon Jesus' keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man's whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.
2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.
3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment, a personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □

JESUS AND MARY: THE REAL NEEDS OF MAN JOHN 11:28–37

Introduction

Man has great needs. These are seen in the experience of Mary with Jesus.

- I Need 1: the glorious message of Christ (v. 28).
- II Need 2: the right response — arise quickly and come to Christ (vv. 29-30)
- III Need 3: the reaching out of people to help others (v. 31).
- IV Need 4: the confession of faith (even if it is limited and weak) (v. 32).
- V Need 5: the understanding and compassion of Jesus
- VI Conclusion: the misunderstanding of people: How could Jesus love so much and let this happen? (v. 37)

I. *John 11:28 The Message of Jesus Christ*

The first need is for the glorious message of Christ. Martha had made a great confession of faith: “Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (Jn 11: 27)

The great confession apparently struck some kind of hope within Martha. Just what she was expecting, perhaps even she did not know, but there was a spark of hope. Her Lord, the Son of God Himself, was now with her. Whatever could be done would be done; whatever help was available would be given. Her faith and trust were in Him. Only one thing was missing: her dear sister, Mary. So she hastened to share the glorious news with her. Note that she shared three things.

1. Christ is the Teacher (See *The Teacher*, Jn. 11:28).
2. The Teacher is *here*. The answer that we so desperately need is now available. The One who can give us the help we need has now come: the Teacher who can teach us how to meet all of our...
 - needs and necessities
 - troubles and trials
 - sorrow and hurt
 - loneliness and emptiness

Mat 20:28 “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

3. The Master asks *for you*. Jesus calls and summons you. He wonders where you are and why you have not come. He wants you now.

Mat 11:28-29 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Isa 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

JOHN 11:28 THE TEACHER (HO DIDASKALOS)

The definite article (the) is important. Jesus is not just another teacher like all other teachers. He is *the* Teacher, the teaching Master. This means at least two things.

1. Jesus is the Supreme Teacher, the very best teacher who has ever lived. He is known for being the greatest of teachers. No one even comes close to comparing with Him. He stands *alone as the Teacher*.
2. Jesus is the Master, the Lord, the Teacher of all men. In calling Jesus the Teacher, there is the idea of His Lordship and deity. Note that He claims deity Himself: “You call me Teacher and Lord: and rightly so, for that is what I am” (Jn. 13:13). His being the Teacher is tied closely with His being the Lord: In fact, logic alone would tell us that the Lord would be the greatest Teacher among all men.

Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. □

II. John 11:29–30 The Right Response to Jesus Christ

The second need is to make the right response to Christ — the response of arising quickly and running to Him.

1. The message of Christ was enough to stir Mary. It is enough to stir action within the heart of any person who honestly seeks the answer to the riddle and trials of life and death.

2. When Mary heard, she responded quickly. The idea is that she jumped up quickly and ran to meet Jesus. Hope and expectation were stirred in her heart. Note that the message had come to her in a very quiet manner: secretly, in a whisper, without anyone else knowing it (v. 28).

1 Cor 8:6 Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

1 Cor. 12:3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Thought 1. No matter how quietly the message is proclaimed, man is to respond by arising quickly and running to meet Jesus.

3. Mary acted on her own and made her own decision.

⇒ She did not consult with friends and neighbours, not even with those who were closest to her. She got up and went to Jesus, leaving both friends and neighbours behind.

⇒ She did not consult with religionists. Religion was important to her. The local religious leaders were even present, visiting and comforting her in her sorrow and sharing the comfort that their religion offered. But it helped her so little. When she heard the message that the Lord was calling for her, she went to Him, saying nothing to the religionists.

⇒ She did not consider appearance or decorum. Think about the situation. The house was full of friends and neighbours. Who was going to greet them, receive their sympathies, express appreciation, and handle their presence? None of that mattered to Mary, not now. The Lord was calling for her. She must respond and go to Him immediately.

⇒ She did not consider the distance. Jesus had not yet entered town, so Mary had to walk a considerable distance to reach Him. She had to make the decision to break away from those back in the house despite what they might think and feel. She had to march forward and travel to Him in order to respond to His call.

Luke 11:9-10 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

2 Cor 6:2 For he says, "In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation.

Deu 30:19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

III. *John 11:31 Ministering to the Needy*

The third need is for people, friends and neighbours, to reach out to help each other. This is a touching picture. When the neighbours and friends saw Mary leave quickly, they thought she was going to the tomb to mourn over Lazarus. They were with her for one reason: to “comfort” her. Naturally, they followed her, thinking she needed help in bearing her loss. Note what happened.

1. They, too, were brought face-to-face with Jesus. Because they were set on comforting Mary, they were to share in Mary’s experience with Christ.
2. They, too, were given the opportunity to trust Christ. In fact, many did believe, “put their faith in Him” (v. 45).

Thought 1. The friends and neighbours set a clear example of helping others. The world needs more and more neighbours such as these. Note the result of sincere help. It does not go unnoticed by Christ. Many are brought to Christ when they help those who already know Christ.

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

Rom 15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Gal. 6:2 Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Heb 13:3 Remember those: in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

IV. *John 11:32 Confession of Faith*

The fourth need is the confession of faith, even if the faith is limited and weak. As soon as Mary saw Jesus, she fell at His feet in homage and worship and made a confession of faith in Him.

1. She called Him, “Lord” (See *Teacher*, Jn. 11:28; and *Lord*, Phil. 2:11).
2. She expresses, however, the same complaining, limited faith that Martha did (See Note, Jn. 11:21-22).

Thought 1. The need of man is to make a genuine confession of faith. Even if one’s belief and confession are weak, they will grow as one walks with Jesus day by day.

Mat 10:32 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Phil 2:11 *And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

PHILIPPIANS 02: 11 LORD (KURIOS)

Lord means master, owner. Jesus was called Lord from the very first of His ministry (Mt. 8:2) and He accepted the title. He even called Himself Lord (Mt. 7:21). The word had been a title of respect throughout history. During the Roman empire it became the official title of Roman emperors. It was also a title given to the gods. The Hebrew title Adonai is translated Lord (Gen. 15:2), so is Jehovah (Mt. 1:20-22; 2:15; 3:3; 4:7, 10; 11:25; 21:9; Mk. 12:29-30; Lk. 1:68; 2:9). Both titles, Adonai and Jehovah, are translated Lord in Mt. 22:44. Jesus Himself called God the Father, “Lord” (Mt. 4:7, 10). But the title is more often given to Jesus. There is no question that Jesus is recognized as Lord, being identical with the Old Testament Jehovah and Adonai (Mt. 3:3; 12:8; 21:9; 22:43-45; Lk. 1:43; Jn. 14:8-10; 20:28; Acts 9:5). When Jesus is called Lord, it means that He is Master and Owner, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the only true God. He is Jehovah, Adonai, God Himself. □

V. *John 11:33–36 The Compassion of Jesus Christ*

The fifth need is the understanding, feelings and compassion of Jesus. Note three things.

1. Jesus “was deeply moved [enebrimesato] in spirit.” The word “moved” is often interpreted to mean stern reaction, displeasure, or anger (because of its use in other places). Some interpreters feel that Jesus was angry with the friends and neighbours because of their loud wailing and moaning, feeling that they were being hypocritical and insincere in their sorrow. This interpretation is difficult to see.

⇒ Mary was certainly sincere in her sorrow, and Jesus was definitely touched by her need.

⇒ The Jewish friends and neighbours (which were “many,” v. 19) were sincere in “comforting” her (v. 31), and many were open to trusting the Lord (v. 45). Jesus was certainly touched by those as well.

In light of the whole scene, it seems best to see Jesus gripped with intense emotion. He was deeply moved...

- by Mary, who was so broken in sorrow
- by Martha, who was gripped by pain and hurt

- by those who were really feeling the death of Lazarus and the sorrow of the family
- by the terrible tragedy of death and the pain it causes
- by the terrible price He was soon to pay conquering death. (This was certainly glimpsed by Jesus in such a scene as He was now experiencing.)

Jesus is *deeply moved in spirit*: He is moved in understanding and feeling and compassion for all who are hurting and suffering. The word troubled (etaraxen heauton) means agitated, moved deeply, disturbed within. Jesus was actually feeling the misery and pain of all. His spirit was disturbed and agitated, deeply moved by the whole scene of sorrow and death.

2. Jesus asked where the dead (person) was. Note that Jesus knew where the grave was, but He asked where it was for two reasons.

=> If He had gone straight to the tomb, there was the possibility of some charging Him and Lazarus with being in collusion and tricking the people.

=> He needed to distract the people from their deep wailing and arouse their expectation for something unusual about to happen.

Note also that Jesus demonstrated His concern over the dead. He wishes to know where every dead person is, both those who are spiritually dead and those who are *physically dead*. He wants to point man's attention to the fact that all men lie in the grave. All must look to Him if they wish to escape death (Heb. 9:27; Jn. 3:16; 5:24.)

3. "Jesus wept" in love. Why? He wept over death, over man's pain, sorrow, suffering, and fate. Man was never made for sin and death; man was made for righteousness and life. Sin and death...
 - deceive and lie
 - hurt and maim
 - separate and alienate
 - misuse and defeat
 - destroy and corrupt
 - condemn and doom eternally

Rom 8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Psa 78:39 *He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.*

Psa 103:13 *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

Psa 103:17 *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children.*

Isa 63:9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

VI. John 11:37 The Misunderstanding of People

The misunderstanding of man. The people asked the same question that is so often asked by men of every generation. How could Jesus love so much and let this happen? The problem, of course, is not Jesus. People just do not understand...

- that the nature of the world is decay and corruption, trial and trouble, suffering and pain, death and hell — all because of selfishness and sin.
- that trials and sickness can be an opportunity for God to do a great work (See Note, Jn. 11:4).

Mat 5:45 That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

1 Cor 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Cor 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

2 Pet 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ■

JESUS AND LAZARUS: POWER OVER DEATH

JOHN 11:38–46

Introduction

Jesus Christ confronted death and demonstrated His great power over death. In confronting and conquering the tomb of Lazarus, He demonstrated that the believer's hope is not in vain. The believer will be raised from the dead, resurrected by the great shout of the Lord's power.

- I The great confrontation of Jesus with the dead (vv. 38-39).
- II The great promise of unlimited faith (v. 40).
- III The great prayer of purpose (vv. 41-42).
- IV The great shout of power over death (vv. 43-44).
- V The reaction to Jesus' great power (vv. 45-46).

I. John 11:38–39 Confrontation of Jesus Christ with the Dead

Jesus confronted the dead. Note two striking points.

1. Jesus was deeply moved within Himself. He stood face-to-face with the grave. Again...
 - He saw the pain of Mary and Martha and their dear friends.
 - He sensed the terrible dread and bondage that death held over His dear friend Lazarus and over the whole human race.
 - He was keenly conscious of His own terrible death that lay only a few days away.

He felt the emotions of both compassion and anger, sympathy and indignation. He was moved from deep within, sensing an intense love for all who suffer and a holy anger and displeasure against death (Jn. 11:33-36).

2. Jesus was confronted with an objection from a believer. Note two things.
 - a. An unbeliever might question if Lazarus were truly dead. Note the emphasis upon the fact that Lazarus was truly dead.
 - Lazarus was in a real tomb, a tomb of the wealthy. Martha's wealth was indicated by her having owned a house large enough to lodge Jesus and His disciples. If by any chance Lazarus had only been mistaken for dead before, he was certainly dead now. It had been four days since he had been placed in an enclosed tomb. Four days without food or water in such circumstances would kill any weak and critically ill person.
 - There was Martha's shock at Jesus' request. The body would have started to decompose after four days.
-

- b. It was a believer who objected to Jesus' confronting the situation. There was distrust and uneasiness in Martha's objection. She was not sure that Jesus' action was wise nor for the best. She was uneasy about what Jesus was doing and asking. She did not want the situation disturbed. She was satisfied with things as they were, with Lazarus laid to rest as he was. What she wanted was to be comforted, not disturbed.

Thought 1. Many believers want things left alone, being happy with things as they are. They want only enough of Christ to give them comfort and security and ease. They want little if anything to do with His demands and confrontation with the sin and death of the world (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).

Mat 13:58 *And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.*

John 12:37 *Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.*

Rom 11:20 *Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.*

Heb. 3:12-14 *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

Heb 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

Jude 1:5 *Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.*

LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

*Then he said to them all, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." **Luke 09:23***

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his

desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up one's cross*, to *follow Christ*. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). (See Mt. 19:21-22; 19:23-26; 19:27-30) □

II. ***John 11:40 Reward of Faith in Christ***

The great promise of unlimited, resting faith. Jesus challenged Martha to take an enormous leap of faith. He wanted her to conquer her complaining and to set aside her objections (Jn. 11:21-22). He wanted her to trust Him, to quit questioning what He did. He wanted her to trust...

- His judgment and will
- His knowledge and understanding
- His Word and instructions

Very simply, He wanted her to rest in Him, to place an unlimited, resting faith in Him. (See *Resting Faith*, Jn. 11:40)

Note what the promise was to Martha (and to all): if she would believe and simply rest in Him, she would “see the glory of God.” By glory, Jesus meant His mercy and power, love and care on this earth. However, the promise applies to the next world as well. The person who will step back and let God act as He wills — the person who truly rests in God — will see the glory of God in the next world.

JOHN 11:40 RESTING FAITH AND UNLIMITED FAITH

*Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” **John 11:40***

There is a rest for the believer. It is called the *believer’s rest* or *God’s rest*. The believer enters God’s rest by what may be called a *resting faith* or an *unlimited faith*. An unlimited, resting faith is the summit, the highest level or stage of faith. It is the level of faith God desires for every believer. He longs for every child of His to enter the rest of God. A resting (unlimited) faith is a faith that rests in at least four things.

1. A resting faith is a rest of *deliverance* and *salvation*. It is to rest in God’s Word, to know beyond all question...
 - that one is truly saved and delivered from sin and shame, death and hell.
 - that one is freed from the guilt and nagging of conscience.
 - that one has open access into God’s presence through prayer.

Isa 28:12 *To whom he said, “This is the resting place, let the weary rest;” and, “This is the place of repose” — but they would not listen.*

Isa 30:15 *This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”*

Mat 11:28 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb 4:3 *Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.*

2. A resting faith is a rest of *service and ministry*. It is not inactivity, not a life that does nothing for God and the world. It is a rest that comes from committing one’s life to and purpose of Jesus Christ, a rest that is...
 - filled with purpose, meaning and significance.

- committed to sharing Christ with a world lost, full of desperate needs.
- surrendered to God's call for personal involvement and service.
- filled with God's Spirit and equipped with His gifts for service.
- pleased with God's call and gifts, with one's lot in life and place of service.
- complete, fulfilled, satisfied and unashamed in one's life.

Mat 11:29 *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

2 Cor 5:18-20 *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Heb 4:11 *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

Job 22:21 *Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.*

3. A resting faith is a rest of *assurance and confidence* in the future. It is a rest of peace about the future. It is...
- the knowledge that all the enslavements and bondages of this life have been conquered in Christ, even death.
 - the knowledge and experience of God's daily care through all of life; the knowledge that God will take care no matter what may come or fall.
 - the knowledge and very real presence of hope: the hope of eternal life, of heaven, of the *eternal and perfect rest* for the people of God.

John 14:27 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Rev 14:13 *Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."*

Isa 14:3 *On the day the Lord gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

4. A resting faith is a rest of *courage and knowledge*. It is a faith that does not question or complain. It is a faith that truly believes, trusts and rests in God, that actually...
- takes God at His Word and does exactly what He says.
 - knows that God's presence and blessing are upon one's life.
 - puts everything into God's hands and launches out as He says.
 - knows that what happens is under God's control.
 - knows that all things, no matter how terrible, will be worked out for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28)
 - experiences God's presence and care day by day.
 - knows victory over all: being filled with all confidence, assurance, hope and peace.

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Psa 116:7 *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

Psa 119:165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. □*

III. John 11:41–42 The Purpose and Power of Prayer

The great prayer of purpose. Note the wording of this point: prayer of purpose. Every prayer is to be a prayer of purpose. This is Jesus' point. He was praying for a specific purpose, and in so doing He demonstrated the purpose and the power of prayer. When a man truly prays with purpose, he receives the answer to his prayer and witnesses to the power of prayer. Note Jesus' prayer.

1. Jesus addressed God as "Father." Jesus had an intimate and continuous relationship with God: a Father-Son relationship. He knew God as His "Father," and God knew Jesus as His Son. The question naturally arises, how well does He know Him? One thing is of critical importance. When Jesus claims to know the Father, He does not mean that He knows God in the same sense as other men know Him. Note His exact words:

John 10:15 *"Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

How well does God know any man? However well God knows Jesus, that is how well Jesus knows God. That is what Jesus is claiming. God, of course, knows every man perfectly, knows everything there is to know about a person. Therefore, Jesus knows the Father perfectly, just as God knows everything about Him. Jesus and “the Father are one” (John 10:30). There is a perfect, intimate knowledge and relationship between them.

John 7:29 “*But I know him because I am from him and he sent me.*”

John 17:25 “*Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.*”

Thought 1. Believers are hereby taught to call upon God as “Father” and to approach God as a child would: intimately and boldly, yet respectfully and reverently.

2. Jesus requested that His Father do something: “You have heard me.” What Jesus asked was not stated, but the reader knows from the context that it has to do with...
 - the power to conquer death
 - the strengthening of believers standing around and watching Him
 - the stirring of others to believe and trust Him
3. Jesus offered thanksgiving to the Father, praising the Father for the glorious privilege of prayer and of being heard and having His prayers answered. This is a striking lesson for believers. God is to be praised for prayer, for the open access He allows into His presence and for the glorious fact that He hears and answers us (Jn. 16:23-24, 26-27).
4. Jesus expressed a perfect and confident knowledge in God: “You always hear me.” There is no hesitancy, doubt or questioning on Jesus’ part. He knew perfectly that God heard His prayers — always.
5. Jesus bore testimony through the prayer. He prayed
 - to show the close personal relationship between Himself and God.
 - to stir belief that He was the Sent One of God (See *Jesus’ Origin*, Jn. 3:34; 4:31).

Note that the above points could be stated as the fivefold purposes for prayer.

1. To honour and worship God as “Father.”

Rom 8:15-16 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

2. To secure whatever is needed to live righteously and to minister.

Mat 21:22 *“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*

Luke 11:9 *“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

John 14:14 *“You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

John 15:7 *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

3. To praise and thank God.

Rom. 15:6 *So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Psa 29:2 *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.*

Psa 34:3 *Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.*

Psa 71:8 *My mouth is filled with your praise, declaring your splendour all day long.*

Psa 107:32 *Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.*

Psa 145:5 *They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works.*

Isa 25:1 *O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvellous things, things planned long ago.*

4. To prove and demonstrate one’s confidence in God.

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of him.*

1 John 3:22 *And receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.*

5. To bear testimony and proclaim that Jesus is the One sent by God.

John 6:38 *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

John 17:8 *“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.”*

Thought 1. Jesus always prayed with purpose; therefore, He always received the answer to His prayer and bore testimony to the power of prayer. So it is with every true believer. When we pray with purpose, God answers our prayer, and by so doing He proclaims...

- that Christ is the Son of the living God
- that Christ is the One sent into the world to open the door (secure access) into God's presence
- that Christ is the One who has the power over death

JOHN 03:34 ORIGIN OF JESUS CHRIST: "GOD HAS SENT"

Jesus is the Apostle of God. He is God's Ambassador, God's perfect Spokesman. It should be noted that God poured out His Spirit *without measure* or *limit* upon Jesus — the only apostle upon whom this was ever done. (See Jn.4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 36-37; 6:38-40, 44, 57; 7:16, 18; 8:16, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.) □

IV. *John 11:43–44 Jesus' Great Power over Death*

The great shout of power. Note three significant points. Note also how the resurrection of Lazarus pictures the coming resurrection of the believer. (1 Cor. 15:12-58.)

1. The power over death comes from Jesus alone. Few prophets have ever raised a dead person except Jesus. Jesus alone has the power to raise the dead. Note that He simply spoke three words, "Lazarus, come out"; but He shouted them out with a loud voice. Why?
 - a. A shout matched the enormity of the miracle. It stressed the enormous power required to raise the dead.
 - b. A shout stressed that the power within Jesus is the power of God Himself. With just a shout Jesus can...
 - call forth the enormous power of God
 - call forth the greatest amount of power imaginable, the power to raise a person from the dead.

John 5:26 *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

2. The shout of Jesus is personal. Jesus shouted the name of Lazarus. He did not just shout, "Come out"; He shouted "Lazarus, come out." Jesus knows every believer by name, and

He is personally concerned over the death of everyone. The day is coming when He will shout “Come out.” and only the ones personally known by Him will respond.

John 14:2-3 *“In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

John 10:3 *“The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”*

John 10:14 *“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”*

John 10:27 *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

3. The results of the shout of Jesus were twofold.

a. The person who was dead came forth. The Son of God spoke and called him forth. There was no way he could remain in the grave, no power that could hold him there. He came forth...

- immediately • perfectly • obediently
- visibly • just as he was • unquestionably

b. The person who was resurrected received the personal attention of Jesus. Note the attention and the thoughtfulness of Jesus: “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” The wonder of the miracle did not detract Him from continuing to minister and to help wherever He could. It was not enough to share in the wonder of the miracle. Service to God was, and always will be, the call of our Lord Jesus to every man, even in eternity.

Mat 25:23 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*

1 Cor 6:3 *Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

Rev 22:5 *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

V. John 11:45–46 Response to Jesus Christ’s Power

The reaction to Jesus’ great power was divided. Some believed and put their faith in Him (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2: 24). Others were gripped with obstinate unbelief and caused trouble. They refused to accept Jesus as the Son of God despite the most powerful evidence. They ignored the evidence and evaded the issue of His demand for belief. Therefore, they lost their opportunity “to see the glory of God” (v. 40).

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” ■

JOHN 02:24 SAVING FAITH: BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of saving faith, of what genuine faith is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not *just believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Saviour just as A. J. Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.
2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man’s total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man’s commitment of all he *is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man’s affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being and possessions into Jesus’ hands. He lays himself upon Jesus’ keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man’s whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.
2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.

3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □