

TAKE AWAY THE STONE

Scripture:

John 11:38-40

John 11:38-40 NIV Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. {39} "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." {40} Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

Introduction

These sisters, Mary and Martha, had experienced a crushing blow. The brother they loved and trusted had suddenly become ill and died. To make matters worse, Jesus, the friend they trusted, had not come in time to heal Lazarus. He arrived, four days after Lazarus died. Lazarus is in the tomb. A great stone now covers the entrance.

Jesus says, "Take away the stone." Conflicting emotions well up in both sisters. Lazarus is dead. His body is now decaying. No one likes the odor of decaying flesh. Martha objects. But Jesus says, in effect, "If you want to see the glory of God, take away the stone."

I. The remains

John 11:39b NIV "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

A. Word Study

3605. ozo, od'-zo; a prim. verb (in a strengthened form); to scent (usually an ill "odor")--stink.

B. Lazarus

2976. Lazaros, lad'-zar-os; prob. of Heb. or. [H499]; Lazarus (i.e. Elazar), the name of two Isr. (one imaginary)--Lazarus.

499. 'El'azar, el-aw-zawr'; from H410 and H5826; God (is) helper; Elazar, the name of seven Isr.--Eleazar.

410. 'el, ale; short. from H352; strength; as adj. mighty; espec. the Almighty (but used also of any deity)--God (god), X goodly, X great, idol, might (-y one), power, strong. Comp. names in "-el."

5826. 'azar, aw-zar'; a prim. root; to surround, i.e. protect or aid--help, succour.

C. Others who had "remains" in a tomb

1. Jephthah

Judges 11:1-2 NIV Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman."

2. Moses

Exodus 2:14-15 NIV The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known." {15} When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.

3. Paul (Saul of Tarsus)
Acts 8:1, 9:1-2 NIV And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest {2} and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

II. The stone

John 11:38-39a NIV Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. {39} "Take away the stone," he said.

A. Word Study

3037. lithos, lee'-thos; appar. a prim. word; a stone (lit. or fig.):-- (mill-, stumbling-) stone.

B. The stone is an instrument of segregation

1. It keeps the stink of our past shut up in its tomb
2. It prevents us from going in to view our past
3. It stands as an obstacle to our seeing God's glory in our lives

III. The glory

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

A. Word Study

1391. doxa, dox'-ah; from the base of G1380; glory (as very apparent), in a wide application (lit. or fig., obj. or subj.):--dignity, glory (-ious), honour, praise, worship.

4100. pisteuo, pist-yoo'-o; from G4102; to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by impl. to entrust (espec. one's spiritual well-being to Christ):--believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.

4102. pistis, pis'-tis; from G3982; persuasion, i.e. credence; mor. conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), espec. reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstr. constancy in such profession; by extens. the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself:--assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

3982. peitho, pi'-tho; a prim. verb; to convince (by argument, true or false); by anal. to pacify or conciliate (by other fair means); reflex. or pass. to assent (to evidence or authority), to rely (by inward certainty):--agree, assure, believe, have confidence, be (wax) content, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield.

B. Mary and Martha saw a Lazarus resurrected

C. You can see new hope, new life

Conclusion

The prerequisite for new life is, "Take away the stone." It means opening the parts of your life to Jesus that "don't smell good". It means being open and transparent with Him. It means giving Him access to the dead, decaying parts of our lives so he can bring new life. Will you trust Him enough to take away the stone?