

"The Teacher has Come
And is Calling for you..."
Roll Away the Stone" Part 2 — John 11:1-44



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Roll Away the Stone” Part 1

John 11:1-44

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John 11:1-44 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. 7 Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 "But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." 12 Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." 13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." 17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. 19 And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there." 32 Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" 37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

As we now once again revisit this account of the raising of Lazarus, one can easily recognize the major players in the story. We see the dead and the “soon-to-be-alive” Lazarus and we see the coming of the great physician and healer, Jesus. But let us not miss the minor players, for their role in the message of this text is crucial. Mary, Martha, the apostles and the funeral crowd all would play a part in this event.

We begin back with Jesus and the boys, who were apparently a distance from Bethany where the death of Lazarus was all playing out. In verse 14 and 15 of our text, we read the following words that were aimed at the apostles: *Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there..."* Firstly, we can't help but see what we might consider a social and cultural faux pas that Jesus exercised here. Most of us would step back and remark that His actions seemed...*well*, kinda *cold!* “*I am glad...?* Seems a bit harsh and detached huh? I mean, He didn't pick up and get down to Bethany ASAP. He didn't send a card to the family or even pray for Lazarus as far as we know and He didn't even go to the funeral. Ironically, He didn't even need to go to Bethany to heal Lazarus! We know He has done such work from afar before. But He did not reach out. He did not move to intercede. ***What was He thinking?***

Once Jesus was finally ready to hoof it on down to Bethany, the boys attempted to keep Him from it. There had already been both threats and attempts upon His life, and the apostles felt that such a trip was a suicide mission. Jesus' answer was *"Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."* Was this some sort of cryptic message? Or was Jesus simply saying that when one sees where he is going there is no danger?

During the World War 2 blackouts in Great Britain, it was said that more people died due to the darkness than people dying on the field of battle. Thousands of people died in road accidents because of the lack of street lighting and the dimmed traffic lights. To help prevent accidents white stripes were painted on the roads and on lamp-posts. People were encouraged to walk facing the traffic and men were advised to leave their shirt-tails hanging out so that they could be seen by cars with dimmed headlights. Many other people were injured during the Blackout because they could not see in the darkness. People were injured tripping up, falling down steps, or bumping into things.

When you can't see where you are going, you aren't going to get there in one piece. Being “lost” can mean much more than just not being born again. It can mean not having clear objectives and not following the road map. It can mean that one is simply traveling in the dark.

After everything seemed to be “over” and it was all so “too late” to intercede, Jesus told His apostles “(so) *that you may believe.... let us go to him.*” Note that he didn't say “let's go to Bethany” or “let's go down to visit the family” or even “let's go down and do some miraculous works.” Apparently He didn't go to a destination...to a place or event...or to “do” **anything** particular at this point. He said “let us go to **him.**” According to the language of the text, he went to “go to Lazarus.” Jesus was going there to connect with the *man* Lazarus.

Then in John 11, verse 28, we read those words: words that if heard in the real world would take our breath away! “*The Teacher has come, and He is calling for you*”. Woa. That's heavy! Think about hearing those words spoken and directed towards you! Ahhh...but isn't that the gospels in a nutshell? Isn't that the Life and Times of Jesus? For the Teacher **has** come, and He **is** calling for **you**...

Many people today will overtly and publically declare that 'God has never spoken to me'. Perhaps they have heard Christians speak about such things. Or maybe even they've talked with a believer and they hear that believer say things like “*God said this, or God said that, and God guided me here or there*” - and they think to themselves: “What

is this deified communique? Is it a red telephone straight to heaven, or what?" Maybe they even think of themselves as a reborn individual but would still deny any direct dispatch from the "otherworld."

This issue is often such an enigma because folks tend to believe that if God was going to speak to them it would be in a near audible voice. And that such a voice would come only in response to **our** initiation...**our** opening monologue. **Our** reaching out. They want to believe that they would hear from heaven actual words...a supernatural audio phone call or at least a powerful poetic email in response to their initial phone call. Some folks even hold to the premise that some night while they're asleep, they will see a vision and God will supernaturally communicate to them through that. Many people will tell you that God has indeed so communicated with them and has given them individual revelation and direction. But others will reject all of that, claiming that God is distant, immense, and aloof. That He thus cannot be known, and certainly therefore they do not know Him!

One very popular notion is that such communication will accompany some kind of sensual experience. A powerful feeling, and emotional dynamic. If such is not present, then God has not communicated with them. Certainly God has indeed "phoned in" via some of these methods in the past, however we need to recognize that nowhere in scripture are we led to believe that these are how God always or even typically speaks to men and women. In fact, nowhere are we told that we should expect God to speak to us in these ways.

So what does the Bible teach regarding how God communicates to this world? Well firstly, we see God communicating to us through His creation. Note clearly that God is not *in* His creation, in the sense of indwelling in the animals, the trees, and in "mother earth" as some people believe. However, Psalm 19 tells us very clearly that the heavens and the sky declare the glory of God, and the earth shows forth His message "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*" (Psalm 19:1-4)

"Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:7-10)

"Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20) In other words, when we look around us the world itself communicates. So what does it say? What does this heavenly email communicate? As witnesses to creation, we can know God's handiwork, and even without any other revelation - we can come to the rational and reasonable conclusion that there is a creative intelligence behind all that we see around us. You only have to look up into a star-filled night sky to hear Him speak of His glory and power and sovereignty. It is a language in itself that testifies to our Creator! Through it all we hear His order and planning. We hear his symmetry and His precision. We hear His artistry and His beauty, His love for his creation and His authority and limitless power and plan.

Another way God speaks to us is through our conscience. According to Romans 1 and 2 God has written His communique...*His direction*, upon the hearts of all men. Some of this we are generally quite familiar with. Do not steal, do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not covet, do not bear false witness, etc. According to scripture, God has written His directions on all men's hearts. Yet mankind has diligently suppressed that knowledge. They dilute it, they suffocate it, and Romans tells us that some have even seared their conscience to such an extent that God has given them up. But that does not change the facts. When we began this life, God had encoded His operational manual on our hearts. God "spoke" to us before we took our first breath.

Thirdly God also speaks through circumstances. The Bible tells us that God is sovereign. That God knows everything and knows it in advance. Such is not to be mistaken as fatalism, but rather as Proverbs 16 and verse 9 tells us: “*A man devises plans in his heart, but it is the Lord God of heaven who directs his steps.*” It's not as if God takes away our free will, but rather that God is reigning over all these things - working them together for His purposes, and further for the plan that He has for your life. It's like this: If we were all traveling the ocean on a deep sea liner, it is of course traveling in one particular direction. But people on the boat are walking around...back and forth, in every direction. They are doing different things simultaneously but ultimately all of them are being taken in one direction. That is how God guides our circumstances, even if we are ignorant to it. God is the ship, and we are going where He plans.

And fourth, God speaks to us through other believers He has placed in our lives. Paul, on one occasion, told the Corinthians that they were epistles, living letters written to other men. In other words, Christians are messengers and witnesses to others in their words, their lives and in their character. Christians are meant to speak to others of the love of God, and are crucial to our understanding of God's will. For we alone can be so very blind and we need each other to find our way.

And lastly, and most of all, God speaks through His Son, the “living Word” and primarily through what He has already said to us.

But someone may ask, Why the necessity for all this? Why did Jesus not just speak the word of healing and prevent the death of Lazarus? Wouldn't things have been a lot easier and a lot less messy? Of course! But since when has “easy” been the motivator for how God works? Jesus knew that His disciples and yes even Mary and Martha would deal with trials and disappointments in their lives because of the fallen world in which they lived. This would be especially true once He returned to the Father. He knew that sometimes it would seem that heaven was silent. They needed to know that despite it all, He was not absent nor was He aloof. He would forever be aware of what was taking place in their lives, and that they would be tested to remain faithful to Him under such times of duress and trials.

God is speaking in so many ways to men, yet so many of them passively sit in denial, and say: “God never came to me, God never spoke to me, God never approached or came near to me.” Yet God has literally spoken volumes to men - but man still seems not to hear! Hebrews chapter 1 verse 2 says that: “*God has chosen in these last days, to communicate to us through His Son.*” That is how God communicated to Mary of Bethany. And that is how God has ultimately communicated with us and still is if we will listen. We are all forever being told “The teacher has come and is calling for you.”

In verse 40, Jesus said those incredible words: “*“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”*”

“*Did I not say...?*” Apparently, Jesus had already told those words to Mary sometime in the past. Maybe she had forgotten, or maybe in her grief she had lost sight of the promises of God. Yet the “teacher” was here, and would remind her of that promise. And Mary heard her Master, and she heard Him from where she repeatedly found herself. She was again at the feet of Jesus. Humble and broken and *listening*.

Maybe that's the biggest reason why we don't hear Him. Because we are still standing in questioning defiance, and we should be at His feet? The teacher is speaking. Are you listening?