

THE GLORY OF GOD

John 11:38-57

GOD IS NOWHERE

- Isn't it strange how people can look at the same things---and still see things so differently?
- I've used this grouping of letters over the years to illustrate how some people can look at nature and see God everywhere---while others can see Him nowhere.
- We all look at the same things in nature---but some have been led to believe that everything can be explained apart from God---by natural evolutionary processes---and are therefore unable to see His hand in anything.
- Others look at the same evidence---and see God everywhere.
- And believe it or not---some can't even see the hand of God in things that no one would attempt to explain naturally.
- Things undeniably supernatural and miraculous.
- That was certainly made obvious in the raising of Lazarus.
- For in his raising some saw a demonstration of the glory of God---and others never saw it.
- Jesus had said Lazarus' sickness would not end in death---but would bring glory to God---and to His Son.
- And for those with eyes to see---for believers---it did.

I. IS SEEN BY BELIEVERS

John 11:38-44

- "Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.
- Jesus said, 'Remove the stone.' Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days.'
- Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?'
- And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me.
- 'And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me.'
- And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.'
- He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"
- We have just read the account of one of the most spectacular events in history---and the Bible tells us of it---in only seven verses.
- Talk about understatement!

- In this event---without any hype---the glory of God was demonstrated.
- For those who were willing to see it.
- Let's go over the details.
- Jesus was still in a very emotional state.
- He had been weeping---touched by the tears and the emotional pain of His friends---and was still deeply moved within when He arrived at the tomb.
- The tomb---which John describes as a cave---may have been a natural cave.
- Or it may have been a room of ledges carved into the hillside---specifically designed to hold bodies or bones.
- Either way---a large round stone disk---probably set in a track ---covered the entrance.
- When Jesus got there---He said---“Remove the stone.”
- Martha probably thought He wanted to view the body of His friend.
- But she cautioned Him---“Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four day.”
- I really like the way the King James Version puts it---“Lord, by this time, He stinketh.”
- She didn't have any idea what He was about to do---in spite of the fact that He had said---“This sickness is not unto death.”
- And---“Your brother will rise again.”
- And---“I am the resurrection and the life.”
- So Jesus said to her---“Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”
- Now I don't think He is suggesting He would do nothing if she didn't believe He could raise the dead.
- I don't believe His action---in this instance---was contingent upon her belief.
- There were times when He made faith a condition---before doing something miraculous.
- But not this time.
- He was going to raise Lazarus---whether she believed He could do it---or not.
- And everyone present---believers and unbelievers alike---would see Him do it.
- But only believers would see in it the glory of God.
- Martha would see it---because she was a believer.
- She didn't know what Jesus was going to do---but she did believe He was the Son of God.

- And since she believed Him to be the Son of God---she would give God the glory for anything He would do.
- And even though she didn't know what was going to happen---she was ready for it.
- Her heart was prepared---by her belief---to see the glory of God.
- And they removed the stone.
- At that point---Jesus raised His eyes---and prayed.
- We've already read the prayer in the Elizabethan English that the older editions of the NASV used when addressing deity---thinking it more reverent.
- Now let's read it from the NIV.
- "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."
- Why did Jesus pray aloud?
- He did so to make certain that God would get the glory for what was about to happen.
- He wasn't doing this by Himself---and He didn't want it to appear that He was.
- This was being done for the glory of God---that the Son of God would be glorified by it.
- He then cried out with a loud voice---"Lazarus, come forth."
- He wasn't shouting to wake the dead.
- It was for the sake of those present that He cried with a loud voice---"Lazarus, come forth."
- He was calling their attention to the open tomb.
- And as they looked---Lazarus came forth---still bound in his grave clothes.
- What a scene that must have been!
- I'm sure everyone just stood there---gawking.
- Until Jesus said---"Unbind him, and let him go."
- Then---after the initial shock wore off--- I imagine the believers had a wonderful time praising God---and rejoicing in what He had done.
- Can't you imagine the questions that were being asked of Lazarus---and the stories he had to tell?
- I'm sure he could have written a best seller---*Life After Death...Four Days in the Tomb*.
- The most important thing---however---was that they had seen the glory of God.
- They had seen God do---what no man could do.
- The believers knew that Jesus was the Son of God.
- And they were able to accept what He had done for what it was---a tremendous demonstration of God's power and glory.
- Believers---however---weren't the only ones to witness what Jesus had done.

- Some who had been unbelievers had seen it---and were changed into believers by what they had seen.
- Because the glory of God...

II. IS CONVINCING FOR CONVERTS

John 11:45-46

- “Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.
- But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.”
- Some were changed by what they saw.
- Their minds and hearts were open to conversion---and when they saw what happened---they believed.
- Now what they believed---we can't be sure.
- And how deep their belief---we don't know.
- But it appears that they had come to Bethany without faith in Jesus---and now they believed in Him.
- And their belief was probably the same as Martha's.
- They now believed that Jesus was the Christ---the Son of God ---the Messiah who was to come into the world.
- They had witnessed something no man could do.
- They must have concluded that Jesus was God---in the flesh.
- That still happens today.
- Some people look around and see things that no man can do---or could have done---and conclude there must be a God.
- They give credit to God---glory to God---for what they see.
- Paul affirmed that this is not only possible---but likely---if people are open to the possibility of God.
- In Romans 1:20 Paul wrote that “since the creation of the world (God's) invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.”
- It's there to see.
- If people will keep an open mind---they will be able to see the glory of God.
- And it will draw them to faith in Him.
- But if they have ruled out the possibility of a God---they will always seek another explanation for what they have seen.
- Or ignore it altogether.

- Some who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus went to the Pharisees---and told them what had happened.
- Why---we don't know.
- I doubt that they went in the hopes of changing their attitudes about Jesus---of converting them.
- They probably just wanted the Pharisees to know what Jesus was up to.
- What they had seen had had no effect on them---and they didn't expect it to make any difference to the Pharisees.
- You'd think seeing a man come to life after four days in a tomb---still wrapped in linens--and maybe even smelling of decay---would have an effect.
- But Jesus had already said that even someone rising from the dead wouldn't convince everyone.
- In His story of a rich man---and another character named Lazarus---Abraham had responded to the rich man's request for him to send someone from the dead to warn his brothers about the horrors of judgment by saying:
- "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead."
- Jesus was primarily speaking of His own resurrection here---but the resurrection of Lazarus certainly illustrated the truth of His statement.
- And even today---2,000 years after the resurrection of Jesus---those who refuse to acknowledge the supernatural will not be convinced---even if someone has risen from the dead.
- Their response---however---is seldom solely an intellectual one.
- Most simply do not want to change---and they don't want others to change either.
- Indeed---the glory of God...

III. IS HINDERED BY THE STATUS QUO

John 11:47-53

- "Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.'
- 'If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'
- But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all,
- nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.'
- Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,
- and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

- So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.”
- The chief priests and the Pharisees got together---they called a quick meeting---and raised the question---“What are we doing?
- Why aren’t we doing something about this man?
- “He is performing way too many miracles.
- Everyone will believe in Him---if we don’t stop Him.”
- Apparently they didn’t even consider the possibility that Jesus might actually be the Messiah.
- They saw His signs---but they didn’t want to believe what the signs signified.
- Their only concern was that belief in Jesus would change the status quo.
- If the people believed Him to be the Messiah---change would be inevitable.
- And the changes would be huge.
- The Romans---fearing the messianic dreams of the Jews---would most likely clamp down on them.
- The Jewish rulers would undoubtedly lose their symbolic positions---and places of authority.
- The Romans might even destroy the ultimate place of their authority---the temple.
- And with it the Jewish nation.
- Ironically---by the time John recorded these events---the Romans had already destroyed the temple.
- Had the Jewish leadership accepted the spiritual kingdom that Jesus had come to establish---if they had become Christians---the Romans may have never had a reason to destroy the temple.
- But they didn’t want to believe anything that would force them to change.
- And they didn’t want to lose their positions of authority over others if they changed---and started thinking for themselves.
- So Caiaphas---the high priest---took control of the meeting.
- And in the typical brash and condescending manner of a Sadducee---he declared that the others didn’t understand the gravity of the situation---nor the obvious solution.
- His proposal was simple.
- They would sacrifice Jesus to save the nation---and to keep things the way they were.
- His plan didn’t turn out exactly as he had expected.
- But it did fulfill God’s plan.
- In fact---John notes that what Caiaphas said didn’t really come from him---it came from God.

- God was speaking through His high priest---even though the priest didn't really understand what he was saying---or where it would lead.
- He thought he could keep people from seeing the glory of God by killing Jesus.
- But what he actually did was set the stage for the greatest demonstration ever of God's glory---the death and resurrection of His Son.
- And---without realizing it---he had actually prophesied that through Jesus' death---the nation would soon include Gentiles.
- Through His death all the children of God---Jew and Gentile alike---would be brought into one spiritual kingdom.
- Ultimately Caiaphas was unable to keep things the way they had been---but those who want to do so---in their lives---and in the lives of others---will do everything they can to hinder the glory of God from being seen.
- And it's amazing how far some will go to discredit God---and try to keep others from seeing the hand of God in this world.
- Those who want to live life as they choose---with no God over them---not only buy into evolutionary philosophies that elevate man to the position of God---but they do everything they can to indoctrinate the masses with their godless philosophies.
- And sometimes they succeed in keeping the glory of God hidden from the masses.

IV. IS HIDDEN FROM THE MASSES

John 11:54-57

- "Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.
- Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves.
- Therefore they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another, as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?'
- Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him."
- The Jews wanted to kill Jesus---but it wasn't quite time for that to happen.
- So He left Jerusalem---and traveled to Ephraim.
- Now we're not 100% sure of Ephraim's location---but most scholars believe it was a village about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem---on the edge of the Judean wilderness.
- And if the authorities had come looking for Him---He would be able to slip into the wilderness and evade them.
- The council's action---orders that Jesus should be seized---forced Him out of the public arena.
- It made possible a few last days alone with His disciples---but it also meant that He was not as accessible to the people.

- The Passover was at hand---the streets of Jerusalem were filling up with pilgrims---and Jesus was the talk of the town.
- People were looking for Him---wondering if He would come to the feast.
- They knew the authorities had labeled Him a criminal---but others believed Him to be the Son of God.
- What were they to think?
- There was a lot of talk about Him---but it was hard for the people to discover the truth about Him.
- Jesus---and the truth about Him---was basically hidden from the masses.
- The architects of the day's society had forced Him into hiding.
- And they were doing everything they could to keep the people from seeing in Him the glory of God.
- I'm afraid that is true in our day as well.
- Those who want to maintain the status quo---and hold positions of influence over the masses---want to keep Jesus hidden.
- For when the glory of God is seen in His Son---everything changes.
- Some day every eye will see the glory of God.
- But until then---it will remain hidden from the masses---and only those who diligently seek after Jesus---will see it.
- Are you willing to risk having to make big changes in your life?
- Is seeing the glory of God worth the cost to you?
- If it is---it's there to see.
- It can be seen in nature.
- It can be seen in the word of God.
- And it can be seen supremely in His Son.
- Jesus died---was buried---and rose from the grave.
- Only in His coming again---will there be a greater demonstration of the glory of God.
- Don't wait until then to see it.
- If you believe---you will see the glory of God.
- And by looking back to an empty tomb---you can see it today!