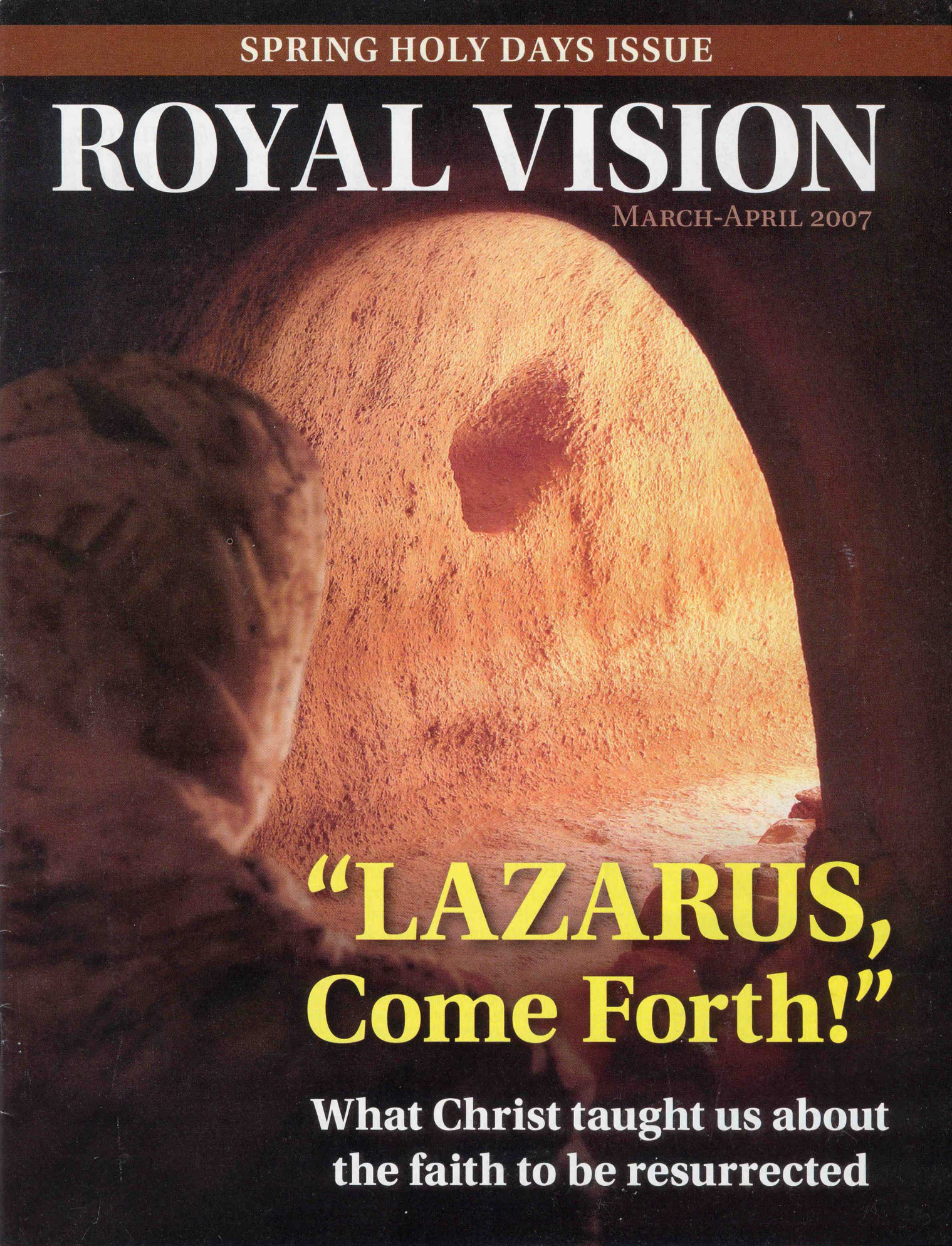


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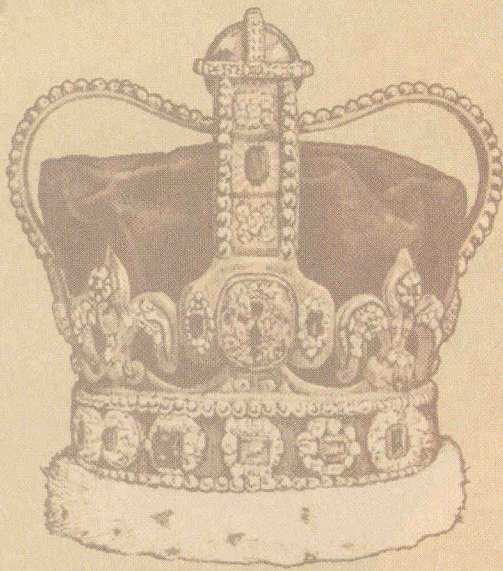
ROYAL VISION

MARCH-APRIL 2007



**“LAZARUS,
Come Forth!”**

**What Christ taught us about
the faith to be resurrected**



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ABOUT OUR COVER Jesus Christ resurrected Lazarus and taught us an important lesson in faith. (Dreamstime)

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Build the Faith of Jesus Christ!



There is a profound lesson in the death and resurrection of Lazarus that we must learn to be saved.

The Gospel of John, part 3

WHEN GOD REVEALED SOME DEEPER TRUTH to me about John 11, I realized how much more I needed to grow in faith. John is teaching us about a resurrection-from-the-dead-*now* faith. It is somewhat similar to Paul's example of faith when he was left for dead in a heap of stones and probably resurrected by God to continue the Work.

This is the kind of faith that brings miraculous healings and many other miracles into our lives.

Here John gives us a dramatic insight into how powerful Christ's faith was. Perhaps he had about 30 years to think about and analyze this Lazarus example before he wrote it in the Bible. So he probably understood Christ's faith better than most of the apostles and prophets.

The good news is, we can and *must* have the very same faith that Christ had.

The Apostle Paul **LIVED** by the faith of Jesus Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). He is talking about possessing the very same faith Jesus Christ has, and that He had while on this Earth. Paul said, *I have the same faith—the faith of Christ. I LIVE by that.*

With that in mind, look at the story of Lazarus, recorded in John 11. This chapter is about the faith of Christ. It teaches us a magnificent lesson in faith.

When Lazarus became sick, his two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent for Jesus. When Jesus received the news, He said, "*This sickness is not unto death*, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). Imagine hearing Christ respond to them this way.

Christ often said and did things that people did not understand. This agitated many people.

A DANGEROUS WORK

Jesus Christ set a tremendous example of doing God's Work in the midst of danger. His disciples marveled over this, but Christ was actually teaching them to follow His example. This is a lesson we urgently need to learn in this end time.

Two days after receiving the news about Lazarus's illness, Christ told His disciples that they needed to go back to Judaea to do some work there. They responded, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" (John 11:8). They had encountered trouble there and actually feared for Christ's life if they were to return.

Jesus Christ did not decide where to go and where not to go based on how dangerous it was. He acted according to the work that needed to be done.

We too can face obstacles and troubles in doing God's Work. Sometimes we simply have to walk into harm's way because something must be done, and God wants us to do it. It takes courage and faith to do that. It is not easy.

It wasn't easy for Christ: The Jews in Judaea had previously tried to stone Him! Jesus's disciples were convinced they would attempt it again. But **CHRIST SACRIFICED IN ANY WAY THE FATHER REQUIRED IN ORDER TO FINISH THE WORK.** *This is my Father's Work*, He said. *My great passion is to finish it, and to do it exactly as He instructed.* He was so determined to follow through with His Father's instructions that *nothing*—not physical danger or anything else—could ever stop Him!

"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (verses 9-10).

Christ is saying that we only have so much daylight—only a short span of time to complete this

Work. Night is approaching quickly, when we will be unable to do this phase of the Work anymore. So we must be urgent! Even if it requires traveling somewhere that could get us stoned, or that will plunge us into fiery persecutions, WE MUST GET THE JOB DONE!

Do you believe Christ could and would resurrect you from the dead today, if there was a need to do so?

God is trying to build faith in us—and that is not easy. In order to achieve that, He has no choice but to put us through challenges and difficulties. It is our responsibility to keep the bigger picture in mind and to say, *This is for God's glory—I must do it.*

This is why we are here. God has given us a wondrous calling. We will never be able to fulfill it unless we are developing the faith to follow Him wherever He leads us, even into danger. This is what Jesus Christ did, and it is an important lesson He taught His disciples. You can be sure it will become more relevant to us as we approach the end of this age.

TROUBLE BELIEVING GOD

Christ then told His disciples about Lazarus: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). The disciples didn't understand—they thought Christ literally meant Lazarus was sleeping and that he would be fine. But Christ was telling them that by this point, Lazarus had died. "Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep" (verses 12-13).

Still, as Christ viewed it, Lazarus was just taking a nap, and He was going to wake him up. Several places in Scripture refer to death as "sleep" (e.g., Daniel 12:2; Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15). When you understand the truth about the resurrections, you realize that death is only a sleep from which you will awaken!

A few years ago, my wife died in the faith. In a very short span of time she will be resurrected into eternal glory. How can we describe her condition today as death?

No one else would have looked at Lazarus's state that way. But again, Christ didn't think like the people around Him. This was *the Word made flesh, the Son of God!* Yet people talked to Him and treated Him like any other man. They didn't understand Him.

If we are going to let Christ live in us and have the faith of Christ, we must learn to view death as He does. We must strive to view everything as He does.

"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, *to the intent ye may believe*; nevertheless let us go unto him" (John 11:14-15).

This whole affair was for their benefit, so they would learn to live by Christ's faith. He was trying to teach them how little of that faith they had. He is also trying to teach us the same lesson. Christ is trying to teach all of His disciples, in any age, to believe God.

Each one of us can have this mind-staggering faith in us. But we all must grow mightily to have the faith of Christ. CHRIST WAS A LIVING EXAMPLE OF HOW POWERFUL OUR FAITH CAN AND MUST BE. Christ's Bride *must* build the same faith her Husband has. And what a faith it is!

Do you have a resurrection-from-the-dead-now faith? Do you believe Christ could and would resurrect you from the dead today, if there was a need to do so? Christ teaches all of us how much more powerful our faith can be.

We must be growing in this all-powerful faith of Christ—the same faith He had when He walked the Earth.

This kind of faith revolutionizes our lives.

Christ was trying to accomplish something vital: *He wanted His disciples to BELIEVE.* He really was God in the flesh! He really could just speak to a man in the grave and say, *Rise up and walk!* and have that man come right up out of the grave! That is incredible.

Do you BELIEVE Jesus Christ? The problem man has had throughout the ages is just BELIEVING GOD! But we must have faith and build faith in our lives, so that like the Apostle Paul we come to the point where we LIVE by the very FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST. It becomes a way of life every hour of the day.

THE FAITH TO BE HEALED

By the time Jesus and His disciples had arrived, Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. Martha and Mary were stricken with grief, and many friends had come to comfort them. It is always good to have people there to comfort us when such trials strike. But we also must be able to see *beyond the grave.* The real comfort in such situations is knowing the *truth of God* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

When Martha came to greet Jesus, she said, *Christ, if you had just been here, you could have healed him and he wouldn't have died* (John 11:21). Of course, viewed from God's perspective, there is little difference between God saving someone's life from a sickness and reclaiming someone from death through resurrection. After all, this is GOD, the Creator of all mankind!

God promises in James 5:14-15 that if the ministry anoints someone and prays "the prayer of faith," then "THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP." When someone rises from the sickbed after being anointed, that is a *type* of the resurrection! God can raise a man from the sickbed—and He can just as easily raise him from the grave!

How strong is your faith in that truth?

We need the very faith of Jesus Christ whether we are to be healed in this life or resurrected from the dead. And of course, some people will not receive their physical healing until the resurrection. But many people are healed in this life—because they believe!

Martha was looking at the situation from a purely physical perspective: *Oh, if ONLY you could have been here before he DIED!* Here she was speaking to the Son of God, who created *all life and all the universe!* Is it too difficult for Him to RESURRECT SOMEONE FROM THE DEAD?

GOD RESURRECTS!

In August of 1977, Herbert W. Armstrong died. A nurse entered the room to check on him and found him motionless, his face ashen white. She checked his pulse, and there was none.

She called for help and people immediately began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and heart massage on him. Suddenly, Mr. Armstrong took a breath. After a couple more minutes, he was breathing on his own.

In a sense, Mr. Armstrong was both healed and resurrected in that incident. Again, one is a type of the other, and the same faith is required for both.

"Shortly after they'd told me what had happened," Mr. Armstrong later wrote, "I felt that if my work in God's hands were finished and God didn't have any further use for me in His Work, that I would rather have remained dead. Because if they hadn't intervened I would have been buried in two or three days" (*Autobiography*, Volume 2).

Mr. Armstrong was tired and worn out. But he returned with real drive, and HE SAID HE ACCOMPLISHED MORE IN THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS THAN IN ALL OF HIS LIFE BEFORE THAT POINT! God performed a real resurrection-from-the-dead miracle in the life of that man!

I remember, however, Mr. Armstrong's son Garner Ted visiting a Church area that I was in and saying during his sermon, "My father *says* he stopped breathing," implying he was skeptical of his own father's claim and didn't really believe it.

Apparently, this man didn't believe that the great Creator God could allow someone to stop breathing and then start him back up again! But is that really so difficult for God? The fruits of the son's life proved that he didn't BELIEVE God!

How strong is your faith that God can start a man breathing again? Or that He can bring a man up from the grave, as He did Lazarus?

If we have difficulty believing that, as Mr. Armstrong's son did, we really need to examine our faith. In the end, this issue is going to decide *which resurrection we come up in!* We will all come up in a

resurrection, but the big question is, which one?

Mr. Armstrong said near the end of his life that he didn't think his son was ever converted. Even if he wasn't, that doesn't absolutely mean he will come up in the second resurrection (when God raises people from the grave who will get to really know God for the first time). Christ condemned some of the Jews in His day, though they didn't possess the Holy Spirit, because they *knew so much!* (e.g., Matthew 23:29-33; Luke 13:26-28). They knew that Christ was from God, but because of their rebellious attitudes, they just couldn't bring themselves to *believe Him*. Once someone understands beyond a certain point, eternal life is at stake. Only God knows what that point is.

Mr. Armstrong's death and resurrection was a Lazarus situation, on a small scale. That *increased* my faith! I never saw any reason to doubt Mr. Armstrong's description of that event. None of the people involved ever disagreed with his statement—as far as I know. Many of our Church members could point to a situation or two in our lives where, if not for God's intervention, we wouldn't be here. That shouldn't pose a stumbling block for anyone.

God resurrects! And sometimes He resurrects today. I have absolutely *no doubt* God resurrected Mr. Armstrong. That man was in his mid-80s, and doing the Work at that age was so difficult he would rather have just died. But God must have figured it was good for him to have to do so much at that age, so he would rely on God more! There is great value to the trials we have to endure as we learn to trust God during our times of greatest weakness.

BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION

Martha said to Christ, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:21-22).



"Shortly after they'd told me what had happened, I felt that if my work in God's hands were finished and God didn't have any further use for me in His Work, that I would rather have remained dead. Because if they hadn't intervened I would have been buried in two or three days."

—Herbert W. Armstrong

She reasoned that if Christ had been there and prayed for her brother, he would have lived—but since that didn't happen, it was too late for even Christ to do anything.

Jesus responded, *Your brother shall rise again.*

Then Martha answered back, "I know that he shall rise again *in the resurrection AT THE LAST DAY*" (verse 24). She knew about the second resurrection, pictured by the Last Great Day, and that she would see Lazarus again. She *believed* it. But then again, Satan knows that doctrine too; he is aware of God's plan in the resurrections. That alone doesn't require the kind of faith we need to be saved.

The fact is, Martha's faith was far from what it should have been. She wasn't viewing the situation at all the way Christ was.

Jesus Christ, in one sense, *simply didn't put any difference between healing, or resurrecting someone*

then and there, or bringing someone up in a resurrection at a later time. If we have the faith of Christ, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE!

Please read that paragraph again!

This is the kind of faith we *must* be building. Christ is the resurrection—yesterday, today and tomorrow! Christ resurrects—period.

This is the kind of faith we need to be healed or resurrected.

Those who are called and faithful to Christ today will be in the first resurrection at His Second Coming. So our understanding of the Lazarus example is supremely important. Time is extremely short.

Christ was *upset* with these people's lack of faith. At times, He is upset with us for that reason. We are still

prone to leave God out of the picture and to trust in this world's solutions to our health trials, for example. We must have *Christ's very faith* IN US!

Seriously consider what God is trying to achieve in YOUR LIFE. He's deeply concerned about YOU, and He wants you to *really* learn to TRUST HIM—whether it be to heal or to help you face any other problem. With God, there is NOTHING we cannot do! The biggest flaw we can have is to *trust ourselves*.

If we truly, deep down, believe in the truth of the resurrections, we also believe that God will heal us right now. There is always the possibility He won't—He may let us die. But we are still going to be healed in the resurrection. It really doesn't matter, as long as we are doing God's will.

The healing promise includes the resurrection because many people will be healed in the resurrec-

tion. Healing and resurrection are one package. If we believe in being healed—now or later—we must also believe in the resurrection.

If we refuse to believe, we will be resurrected into the lake of fire (the third resurrection).

How could this subject be more serious?

From time to time, reread Mr. Armstrong's booklets *The Plain Truth About Healing* and *What Is Faith?* We need to review these outstanding booklets in order to keep building our faith. And we need to accept the trials God allows in our lives as opportunities to build faith. All things work together for our good when we love God (Romans 8:28).

The problem is, if we don't get these words in our mind and begin to apply them, then that puts Jesus Christ into a difficult situation. How can He then reach us? If He can't reach us with *words* and with examples like Mr. Armstrong's resurrection in 1977, how can He reach us? He is going to have to do it through the most severe suffering.

Do you know why the Laodiceans are going to have to suffer so much in the Tribulation? Because they *will not* live by the faith of Jesus Christ. At this time, they refuse to BELIEVE! And there is no excuse for their unbelief! They give God no choice. In order to reach them, He must rebuke and chasten them, as He says He does with every son whom He loves (Revelation 3:19).

But if we are building faith today, we can AVOID the worst of that suffering.

The way the Laodiceans reason is just how Martha reasoned: They may believe in the resurrection, but they put that day far down the road. *I believe in the resurrection, but that's so far away; I don't believe God could bring Mr. Armstrong back to life, though. Or, I don't really think God could heal me right now.*

But again, IT'S ALL THE SAME FAITH—the faith to be healed, or resurrected, or anything else!

Martha believed in the Last Great Day—but so what? Satan also believes in that resurrection. That belief doesn't count for much. Look at how Christ responded to her.

Lazarus is one of the best examples in the Bible to teach us how to build faith.

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, *I AM THE RESURRECTION, AND THE LIFE: he that believeth in me, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE*" (John 11:24-25).

We need Christ's faith in us to be healed. We need this life-changing faith in our lives now!

"I AM THE RESURRECTION"!

What a BOLD STATEMENT! This man standing right there before her said, *"I AM THE RESURRECTION!" I am the one who will resurrect ALL PEOPLE. Are you telling*

Christ, in one sense, simply didn't put any difference between healing, or resurrecting someone then and there, or bringing someone up in a resurrection at a later time.

me I can't bring somebody up out of the grave now?

The Christ who resurrected Lazarus was the Word—the Being God the Father used to create everything! And whether it's today or tomorrow or any other day, *Jesus Christ is the resurrection!*

Many of our loved ones in God's Church, including my wife, have died—but they REALLY ARE going to LIVE AGAIN! God is going to RAISE THEM RIGHT UP OUT OF THEIR GRAVES!

Without faith we can panic over the death of loved ones—even those who are a part of the very elect. When one of God's saints remains faithful to the end, he has CONQUERED DEATH! That is the greatest victory of all. Of course we grieve to not have them in our lives for the moment—but LOOK AT THE VICTORY!

Christ continued, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*. BELIEVEST THOU THIS?" (verse 26). Christ asks the same question of *you*. Do you believe this? Do I? Whoever lives and believes Christ SHALL NEVER DIE! This is a heavy and wonderful truth. Do you *truly* BELIEVE THAT? Do you believe God?

You may sleep a short time, but you'll never die.

Do you really believe that your face is going to shine like the sun forever? That is why you were *born* as a human being! That is why EVERYBODY IN THIS WORLD was born!

We are called into God's Church today to become the Bride of Jesus Christ! That's why you were called now! If we understood that in its fullest sense, we would faint—it is that awesome! DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT TRUTH?

Do you believe this? Christ asked—and He asks this of us today. Surely we *all* need to build more faith in that magnificent truth. The people Christ was speaking to didn't believe Him. Ninety-five percent of God's people today don't really believe Him. We need to make sure that we *do*.

Love God! Believe what He says! The healing promise *includes* the resurrection. Believing in the resurrection is not enough. You must have the faith to get you there. Our faith must be VIVIDLY ALIVE! JESUS CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THIS CHURCH, IS THE RESURRECTION!

We know that God heals, but too often we don't feel personally secure! Or we reason, *God can heal me, but not now*.

Why should it seem strange that the Head of this Church, who is the resurrection, would cause Mr. Armstrong's heart to start beating again? Is Jesus Christ *really* the Head of this Church, or isn't He? If He is, resuscitating a man whose heart has stopped is NOTHING! Christ is going to resurrect people by the BILLIONS!

Yet how easy it is for us to say, *Well, I understand that—but that's far in the future. That doesn't happen today*.

Christ and our Father are alive. We must have *living faith*. Our faith must be dynamically alive, as Christ's faith was. Notice how the Head of our Church felt about their pathetic faith.

JESUS WEPT

Martha went and retrieved her sister Mary, who rushed out to see Jesus. When she got to Him, she fell down at His feet and said the same thing Martha had said before: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32).

These two sisters, and all the Jews around them, were sorely weeping, *overcome* with grief over Lazarus! What did Christ think about that? "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, *he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled*" (verse 33).

Christ had delivered four very powerful and direct statements: "This sickness is *not unto death*, but for the glory of God"; and, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that *I may awake him out of sleep*"; and, "Thy brother *shall rise again*"; and, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet *shall he live*: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*." Still, these people were inconsolable—paralyzed by faithless grief!

And so, CHRIST GROANED IN HIS SPIRIT AND WAS TROUBLED—BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITHLESSNESS. Christ was intensely agonized because of their weak faith—to the point of *groaning*! It *troubled* Him terribly.

DO WE SOMETIMES TROUBLE JESUS CHRIST? DOES HE SOMETIMES GROAN OVER OUR FAITHLESSNESS? God must have groaned mightily over the last era of His Church when it rebelled. But how about *you* personally?

God will *not* give us our wonderful future inheritance unless we REALLY BELIEVE—unless we have the very faith of Jesus Christ in us!

If we truly believe that we will be in the first resurrection, we also must believe that God will heal us—right now!

Verse 35 reads, famously, "Jesus wept." Surrounded by people who were weeping, Christ wept. But He was weeping over something far different from what they were: HE WEPT BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE—and *they should have*! Though these people had heard Him speak and saw Him perform miracles, they remained shamefully impoverished of faith.

When the Jews saw Christ's tears, they misinterpreted them, thinking He was crying for the same reason *they* were crying. "Behold how he loved him!" they said (verse 36).

Do we sometimes trouble Jesus Christ? Does He sometimes groan over our faithlessness?

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"And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should *not* have died?" (verse 37). That is pathetic! They reasoned that Christ could have kept him from dying, but could not resurrect him before their eyes. They are talking about JESUS CHRIST—the WORD MADE FLESH—the one by whom God FRAMED THE UNIVERSE! Here a man had died, and suddenly they began to doubt Christ's credentials.

But Christ *wanted* Lazarus to die—in order to demonstrate just how powerful God is and to teach these people to BELIEVE.

During the 2004 Feast of Tabernacles, I flew from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, to San Diego, Calif. I was to speak on the seventh and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The eighth day was the Last Great Day—picturing the second resurrection of the billions who have never known God.

During my flight to San Diego on Alaska Airlines, God began to pour a deeper understanding of the Apostle John's Gospel into my mind—especially about the resurrection of Lazarus.

Why would God do such a thing, especially during my flight? I believe there is a most inspiring reason why the deeper revelation came. As Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Our only hope is in the resurrection. We must be thinking and studying about God resurrecting us. However, we cannot attain that goal unless we build the faith of Christ and exercise it today.

So during these feasts, God wants our minds on being resurrected. He helps in every way He can so we will build the faith needed to be resurrected. We have lost everything forever if we are not resurrected into God's Family.

We can't fail if we let Christ lead us! But it takes our best effort. IF WE WASTE THIS MAJESTIC OPPORTUNITY, WE LEAVE CHRIST WEeping!

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU WEPT OVER ANYBODY'S LACK OF FAITH, INCLUDING YOUR OWN?

God gave us deeper understanding of Lazarus that we might *believe*. That we might believe a Lazarus could be resurrected today!

We have no future if we fail to exercise the faith of Christ today!

"I KNOW YOU HAVE HEARD ME"

So Christ, still groaning within Himself, went to the grave, and commanded the stone be removed. When people balked at this, Christ said, "Did I not say to you that *if you would believe* you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40, New King James Version).

If Jesus Christ says *anything* in His Word, WE JUST HAVE TO BELIEVE IT. IT'S TRUE! *The Scripture cannot be broken!*

The people removed the stone as Christ commanded, and then He prayed: "Father, I thank thee that *thou hast heard me*. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, *that they may believe* that thou hast sent me." Then He called out, "LAZARUS, COME FORTH" (verses 41-43).

What faith! Christ thanked the Father who sent Him to this Earth, BEFORE He resurrected Lazarus!

That is the faith we need. We need to reach the point where we can walk up to any situation where we need faith and say with confidence, "Thank you, Father, for hearing me!"—and then ACT IN FAITH! Our faith is not perfect, but we need to know that God *always* hears us if we're praying in faith.

That is what this chapter in John's Gospel is about. WE CANNOT MAKE IT UNLESS WE GET AWAY FROM HUMAN FAITH AND BEGIN TO HAVE THE VERY FAITH CHRIST HAD! We must be working and building that kind of faith. We all need to examine our faith. The stakes are high, and most of God's people have not passed the test.

We must know the Father, His Family plan and our part in it—as Christ did. We must look to our Father and Christ for the gift of faith.

Our Father has to be vividly real to us as He was to Christ. We must build this Father-son relationship. YOU HAVE TO KNOW THE FATHER EXTREMELY WELL TO THANK HIM EVEN BEFORE HE ANSWERS YOUR PRAYER! You speak to God as you would a friend sitting next to you. That means you deeply understand your Bible and you pray until you *know* the Spirit is stirred and the faith is flowing from God.

The Laodiceans fail to honor the Father (Malachi 1:6). That is why their faith fails them.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD—THE SAME CHRIST WHO RESURRECTED LAZARUS AND CREATED EVERYTHING. He is the *living* Head. He is the resurrection—today and tomorrow.

Christ told the Jews that though they thought they had eternal life, they did *not*. That was a strong warning for them and for all of us!

People by the billions think they have eternal life today—but they do not. Even 95 percent of God's own Church members think they have eternal life—but they are wrong. God says they are dying spiritually (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

We should and *must* know if we have eternal life. Nothing is even close to being so important. You can't afford to assume or gamble when it concerns your eternal life.

We have to go far beyond human faith.

"And he that was dead came forth, bound hand

and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, *believed on him*" (Jonn 11:44-45).

What a phenomenal example! I don't know why the other Gospel writers didn't include it. Perhaps none of them really understood it at the time as they should have—and the more John thought about it, and the

Christ wanted Lazarus to die—to demonstrate just how powerful God is and to teach these people to believe.

more Christ worked on his mind as he grew to be an old man, the more he realized, *We didn't really understand what Christ was talking about! He was trying to show us the kind of faith we need if we're going to survive the trials ahead. It is conceivable we could even have to die for God.* John certainly had many years to contemplate this example before he wrote his Gospel.

How wonderful that God would reveal deeper truth to us about this example! God wants so much to teach us about the faith that we need and

how we must believe Him! He gives revelation because He loves His people, and He wants us to build faith so we can become sons in His Family. The Father *yearns* for a Family! Otherwise, He never would have sent Jesus Christ down here to be butchered and killed.

If the Father would give His only begotten Son to die for our sins, you know He is serious about having a Family. He laid everything on the line, taking a chance of losing the Word forever! Isn't it logical that He would then require something of us? If He is that serious about having a Family, we must become that serious about entering that Family.

We desperately need the faith of Jesus Christ. That faith enabled Christ to endure His trials to the death. It was *by faith* that He conquered. And we can have that very faith in us by the Holy Spirit.

With the faith of Christ, you will bring God the Father into the picture. You will *know* the Father is building a Family, and that you are a son—and that He *always hears you!*

There is awesome power in our lives when we have the faith of Christ. WE CAN DO ALL THINGS through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

When Christ was being crucified, many Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled in detail. Look at the account in John 19.

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, *that the scripture might be fulfilled*, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it

upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (verses 28-29). You can find that event prophesied in Psalm 69:21.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, *THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE*"—God wants to use these examples to *build strong faith within us!* "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:34-36). You can read about this in Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20.

"And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19:37). That prophecy is found in Zechariah 12:10. All these details about Christ's unparalleled suffering were prophesied in the Old Testament. Many of the Jews knew about those prophecies but still did *not* believe.

Many prophecies are being fulfilled today also. Do you believe? God is going to leave us without excuse.

Some people today are overly absorbed in archaeology, as if an artifact like a piece of broken pottery builds strong faith. It goes much deeper than that. JESUS CHRIST DIDN'T ENDURE TORTURE AND DEATH BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN BROKEN POTTERY! THE APOSTLES DIDN'T SUFFER MARTYRDOM BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH IN PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS!

We are talking about THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST! Christ is alive. He and the Father answer our prayers. There is nothing wrong with archaeology, but we cannot let that form the foundation of our faith.

What about answered prayer? What about revelation from God that makes your Bible come alive? What about fulfilled prophecies? These are some of the things that will build the faith we need in order to sacrifice and endure to the end! GOD IS *ALIVE!* The Father and Son are *ALIVE!*

John and the other apostles wrote about they had seen with their own eyes. Today their writings are canonized in the Bible. They lived and worked with the God who became flesh. They didn't sacrifice their lives because they believed in nice little religious clichés.

First we must prove the Bible is God's Word, and then we must *believe God!*

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

After Jesus Christ was crucified, something of mountain-sized magnitude happened. We must never, ever forget it or grow calloused toward it!

Read the account in John 20, beginning in verse 11. Mary was weeping because Christ's body was gone from the sepulcher. She turned around and actually *saw Jesus Christ standing there*—*ALIVE*, right in front of her—but she didn't recognize Him.

Jesus Christ had just been *RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD!* But she didn't know it was Him.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master" (verses 15-16). She finally recognized who it was.

Now listen to this: "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, *I ascend unto my Father*, and *YOUR FATHER*; and to *my God*, and *YOUR GOD*" (verse 17).

HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION—AND NOT ONLY HIS OWN! CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED, AND THAT OPENED UP THE RESURRECTION TO ALL MANKIND! CHRIST'S FATHER BECAME EVERYBODY'S FATHER! CHRIST'S GOD BECAME EVERYBODY'S GOD! Everything is now open to us in the Family of God! What a transcendent potential! That news ought to shake the universe!

Here is the *only* true God. All the other gods are false!

Think about it: Jesus Christ endured all of the trials and torture, and the most excruciating execution any man has ever faced, so that at the end He could introduce all of us to "my Father, and *YOUR* Father." *You all have the potential to be sons of God!* He said. *It is all opened up to you because of what my Father and I have done! At last, the door is open to all mankind!* What a price had to be paid in order to open that door.

Even though Christ went through all that trouble, you won't find even a hint of Him thinking about failure in the whole Bible. I don't believe Christ for one moment *ever* considered failing. AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU. NEVER CONSIDER FAILING! We have access to all the power a person could ever need!

Christ sacrificed, and now we must sacrifice. We have a universe-size calling, and we were born to fulfill a majestic purpose! *Never forget that.*

A LESSON IN FAITH

When Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, Thomas was not there (John 20:24). I believe he was absent for a reason; Christ wanted to teach a lesson through him—a lesson about healing, about the resurrection and about real faith.

"The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (verse 25). That was quite a negative attitude. He was with Christ during His entire ministry. Perhaps we all deal with that attitude sometimes. But Christ has an answer.

Eight days later, Thomas was with the other disciples, and Christ appeared to them again. He came right up to Thomas and addressed him personally. I'm sure that made Thomas a bit uneasy, especially since his faith was so frail. "Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. DO NOT BE UNBELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING'" (verse 27, NKJV). He said to Thomas, STICK YOUR FINGERS INTO THESE HOLES IN MY HANDS, AND YOUR HAND INTO MY SIDE WHERE I WAS SPEARED TO DEATH, AND BELIEVE!

Do you believe the holes were in Christ's hands? And a huge hole was in His side? Do you believe?

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (verse 28).

Thomas ought to have had more faith than that. Sometimes, we should have more than we have, and I include myself. *We need more faith.* Will you need Christ standing before you so you can stick your hand into His side before you believe? That kind of faith will get us nowhere!

Here is how Christ responded, and He is talking to you: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED" (verse 29).

This was somewhat of a rebuke for Thomas. Christ said, *Thomas, people will come who believe in me, and believe that I was on this Earth and suffered a savage beating and made a bloody sacrifice—and they were not there! They're going to BELIEVE, and they will be BLESSED for it!* Those people who really believe that Christ came and died for our sins and then rose right back out of that grave TRULY ARE BLESSED!

Christ wanted Thomas and all the disciples to see that He really was the Word made flesh, and that He had descended from heaven in order to die for the sins of mankind.

Now, Christ wants US to believe. He wants us to become like the Apostle Paul—LIVING by the very faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Christ wants to FILL US with the faith that will get us healed, the faith that will get us resurrected! He wants us to overflow with the faith to know that when we see our loved ones who died in the faith, their faces will RADIATE LIKE THE SUN AT ITS FULL STRENGTH, AND THEY WILL SHINE AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FIRMAMENT AND AS THE STARS FOR EVER AND EVER!

That is the faith God wants to give each one of us. Faith is a gift from God. God wants to give you the faith of Jesus Christ. ■

Christ endured the most excruciating execution any man has ever faced, so that at the end He could introduce all of us to "my Father, and YOUR Father."