



# THE EXHORTER

---

*“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40*

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

February 12, 2017

## Jump Start # 1762

---

**John 12:11** *“Because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.”*

Our verse today is about a man who was responsible for leading many people to Christ. He is not known to have preached any sermons or taught any classes. He was a traveler. A most unusual traveler. Because of his travel people were believing in Jesus.

The man was Lazarus, the dear friend of Jesus and the brother of Mary and Martha. He lived in Bethany with his sisters. We are not told his age. I have always assumed that he was pretty close to Jesus in age. Lazarus becomes gravely ill. Jesus is sent for. Jesus delays on purpose. Lazarus dies and is buried. On the fourth day, Jesus shows up to a weeping household. Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave. All of this was not done behind closed doors or in the secret of the night. Not only did Mary and Martha know about Lazarus, there were many, many others. They had helped the sisters bury him. They were hanging around the house mourning with them. They opened the grave at Jesus' request. They saw Lazarus come forth. News spread. It spread quickly through Bethany. It traveled the short distance to Jerusalem.

There are several remarkable things that lead up to our verse today.

First, Lazarus never asked to be raised. The Lord did it on His own. It demonstrated His power over death, Satan and the unseen world. At the beckoning of Jesus, Lazarus heard, and came. Even the dead obey Him.

Second, the Scriptures are silent about what Lazarus experienced. His soul went on a journey. It went somewhere. His soul returned back into his body and he came back to life. Those that know the Bible understand where Lazarus went. In Luke 16, another Lazarus died and the angels carried his soul to Hades. This is where Jesus and the penitent thief went upon their death. It is the unseen world where all souls go.

What's missing and what we want to know about is what did it feel like? Did Lazarus sense himself rising up out of the bed? Did he see angels actually carrying his soul? How long did all of this take? What was it like in Hades? What is 'Abraham's bosom' like? How does God comfort the righteous in the next world? What did he see? Did he recognize anyone? How did he feel? Was he happy? Could he see what was happening on earth? Did he know what day it was? Did he know how long he was there?

(OVER)

Third, then Jesus calls Lazarus back. What was that like? Was he glad to return? How long did that take? What did that feel like? Was he scared to be all wrapped up and in the dark tomb?

Tons of curious questions on our part. The Bible doesn't answer any of these. I suppose it just doesn't matter. It doesn't change a thing. If it was something that we needed to know, God would have shown us. We can build a whole system of made up ideas surrounding things that we do not know. Our faith is not blind. It is not made up. It stands upon the revealed word of God. It is God's word that is the foundation and the evidence of what we believe.

We turn a page in our Bibles and come to John 12. Large crowds gathered to see Jesus, and to see Lazarus. The chief priests planned to assassinate Lazarus. Destroy the evidence. Our verse is what follows. Because of Lazarus, because of him, many were believing. Lazarus didn't have to say anything. He didn't have to prepare a sermon. He just had to stand there and allow people to see that he was real. He hadn't been dead for five minutes. It was four days. He was in the grave longer than Jesus was.

Resurrections are the greatest crushing blows to Satan. Satan loves death. It seems so final. It's over. There is no more. But with Jesus, it's up from the grave He arose. The resurrection of Lazarus became a huge dividing point among the Jews. For many, that was it. They believed. Jesus was the Messiah. No more guessing. No more listening to the twisted words of the priests. They knew. They followed. But for others among the hierarchy, that was the last straw. Jesus had to die. From that time on, they were looking for a way to do it.

It is amazing to see this huge divide in faith and conviction. How could anyone not believe after they saw Lazarus standing there? Yet, similar things happen over and over today.

How can a person devote their life to science and not believe in God? The evidence is all around them. Many are realizing because of the complexity of DNA structures and microbiology that the time and chance theory necessary in evolution doesn't work. You can't time and chance things that are so interwoven and so complex and so dependent upon each other. It's not like walking up a stair case. After the first step, then you work on the next step. Then the next step. It's not like that at all. All the steps have to come together at once.

How can a doctor look at the human body and not believe in God? The way the body mends itself and is so complex, how can a person think that this just happened?

How can a person look at the Bible and declare that man wrote this? How do you account for prophecy, unity of thought and writers and knowledge of things, even scientifically, before they were commonly known? Why is it that there is no other book like this book? Who wrote it then? Why is no other book so translated, read, preached and shared as the Bible?

Sometimes it is safe just not believing. Not believing means a person does not have to change. It means that you can do as you please and you can live without guilt and shame. The knowledge of God changes that. It tells us that we are not in charge and some day we must stand before Him. The knowledge of God takes us to His word. He expects us to live a certain way. He expects us to worship Him as He has directed. He expects us to bow our hearts to Him. The knowledge of God takes us to the end of our lives. What happens when we die? There is a Heaven and a Hell. They stand together. Without one, there cannot be the other.

For some today, the easiest solution to all of this is to just destroy the evidence. Kill Lazarus. Burn the book. Remove the name "God" from all public places. Stop prayers. Close the churches. Maybe if all of that was done, they believe that they could then live in peace. It will never happen. Christ lives in the hearts of believers. Long before church buildings were built, the faith of Christians conquered the world. Standing before executioners, those early believers would not deny their Lord. Today, the same would happen.

Instead of destroying the evidence, it's time to look at it. It's time to think about it. It's time to believe.

Kill Lazarus...they would kill Jesus. Later they killed Stephen. Then James. Then Antipas. Then most of the apostles and many of the early believers. They killed them and yet the word spread. Liberal theology and politics has no room for God and the Bible in it's thinking. They are bent on destroying the evidence. It won't work. God is greater than all of them.

Up from the grave He arose...