

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN | John 11:45-57

45 Many of the Jews, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, 46 but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." 51 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. 55 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

John 11:45-57 ESV

In our text today, Jesus has just finished raising Lazarus from the dead. Now there is a large group of people who are eyewitnesses of this miraculous feat. Some of these people choose to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (verse 45), while others choose to run and tell the Pharisees what Jesus had just done (verse 46).

This "council" is the Sanhedrin, which is essentially the Supreme Court of the Jewish nation. This is no longer a minor issue that causes local townspeople to form mobs and attempt to stone Jesus. This has elevated to the status of a national crisis. The goal of this council is not to find the truth. The goal of this council is to ensure the survival of the nation of Israel. They see it like this: *If word gets out that Jesus has raised the dead then it is likely that he will begin to gain a massive following. If this happens, the Roman Empire will likely swoop in and take away the little freedom and autonomy that Israel still has. Rome will begin to see Israel as a threat because there is a consistently growing number of Jews that believe Jesus might actually be the long-awaited King of Israel. And if this number of Jews continues to swell, it could give birth to a Zionist mutiny that attempts to claim sovereignty for the state of Israel over against Rome. The Sanhedrin knows that if this occurs Rome will crush Israel because their nation is no match for Rome's power. So Jesus is no longer just a small-time blasphemer who needs to be stoned, he has become public enemy number one. He is a threat to the very existence of the entire nation of Israel.*

So Jesus, knowing that things are volatile, goes into hiding in an obscure town near the edge of the wilderness (verse 54). Now the great Passover Feast was coming (verse 55) and crowds of Jews were rolling into the city of Jerusalem. The name of Jesus was being whispered by every father, mother, and child. Everyone was looking for him and asking where he was (verse 56). And the Council's plan was already fully set in motion (verse 57): "If anyone knew where he was, they should let them know, so that they might arrest him."

Now what about Caiaphas's words in verse 50? The writer of this Gospel tells us that there is more meaning here than what Caiaphas himself intended. Notice carefully what John says about Caiaphas' words. Caiaphas says in verse 50, "It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." And then John says something amazing in verse 51: "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied." Caiaphas prophesied. In other words, God breathed these exact words out of his mouth. At one level, these are Caiaphas' words with his meaning. And at another level, these are God's words with God's meaning. These are the words that sealed Jesus' death, and they are God's words: "It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." God said that. Better that Jesus die. *Better.* Better than any other plan in the whole universe. These are not merely the words of a man, these are the words of God, and God's word shall never return void.

The death of Jesus is not a tragic set of events which God turned for our good. It is a loving set of events which God planned for our good. God himself served the death warrant for his own Son. He did not just predict it. He unleashed it. This word of prophecy is what tracked Jesus down into Gethsemane and put him under arrest. This word of prophecy is what nailed Jesus to the cross. It probably sounds harsh to speak of God killing Jesus. Killing tends to connote sin, and we all know that God cannot sin. However, it is right to say that God killed his own Son because the Bible says it. Isaiah 53 uses this same language: "We esteemed him stricken, smitten by God... [For] it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief."

In verse 52 John says that Jesus died "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." In other words, God has chosen a people for himself from all over the world (Ephesians 1:4-5). The purpose of the death of Jesus was to glorify God by infallibly and effectually reconciling his chosen people to himself. Do not limit the purpose and the power of the death of Jesus to simply providing a way for all people to be saved. God did not kill his only Son to provide the "possibility" of salvation for all people. God killed his only Son in order purchase a guaranteed victory over the rebellion of his elect.

"When you say with the apostle Paul, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20), you mean: He didn't just offer me love. He pursued me with love. He conquered me with love. He awakened me with love. He satisfied me with love. And now I live, trembling and joyful, on the love God."
-John Piper

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MIDWEEK SERVICE

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Every Wednesday at 6:30PM	Silver Gate Elementary School 1499 Venice Street, San Diego, CA 92107	619-354-8463 info@theresponsechurch.com