

## CAIAPHAS PROPHECIES JESUS' DEATH

John 11:45-57

Key Verse: 11:51-52

“He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.”

This passage shows the response to Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead. As usual, there were two kinds of people. One kind put their faith in Jesus. The other kind became all the more hardened in unbelief and determined to kill Jesus. However, John reveals God's sovereign rule, which is so mysterious and extensive that even the enemies' acts fulfilled God's great purpose. That purpose is to save men from their sins and restore the kingdom of God. Let's learn how to see God's sovereign rule, even over the enemies of God. Let's learn the deep meaning of Jesus' death. May God bless our study today.

First, some believe, some harden their hearts (45-48).

Look at verse 45. “Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.” These Jews who had come to visit Mary wanted to offer their condolences at the death of Lazarus. When Mary got up and went out to meet Jesus, and wept at his feet, they followed her and wept together. Then something unexpected happened. They heard Jesus say that if they believed they would see the glory of God. They heard Jesus' challenge: “Take away the stone!” They listened to Jesus' prayer. They heard Jesus' booming command: “Lazarus, come out!” And they saw the dead man walk out of the tomb alive. It was a miracle. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was walking around, living and breathing right before their eyes. Mary might have confessed, “Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life!” Mary's sorrow turned into indescribable joy. The deadness of her heart gave way to the power of life that filled her soul. She must have given Lazarus a big hug. Those present realized that Jesus had raised a dead man to life and many of them put their faith in Jesus.

Jesus had performed this miraculous sign primarily for his disciples and for Mary's family. They were about to confront Jesus' passion and crucifixion. It would be a time of intense pressure and volatile emotions. Jesus strengthened them with a glorious display of the power of God. It was a prelude to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus wants us to live with resurrection faith in our hearts. We must simply believe Jesus' words, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus' resurrection gives us a living hope in the kingdom of God. 1 Peter 1:3,4 says, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you....” These days many young people worry about their appearance and body shape. But instead of working hard and eating and sleeping properly, they do strange and unnatural things to have six-pack abs or shapely thighs. They are too preoccupied with their flesh. Jesus gives us a living hope in the kingdom of God that enables us to transcend the flesh and live a spiritual life. Many older people worry about retirement. Social Security doesn't give them security. But God gives us an inheritance that endures forever. Jesus' people are all richer than Bill Gates. We have no future security problem, no reason to worry. We only have a faith problem. When we really believe the resurrection of Christ we can work hard and suffer joyfully to fulfill God's world mission purpose.

However, not everyone believed. Some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. These people did not try to see the glory of God through Jesus' miraculous sign. Even though they saw a man raised from the dead, they did not believe in Jesus. They remained under the power of death. They remained under the shadow of fear and the oppression of the devil. They were faithful to their father the devil and informed the Pharisees of what Jesus had done. They saw the same thing as others, but did not believe. Resurrection faith requires a decision.

The religious leaders called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, a seventy member body made up of the chief priests and the Pharisees. The chief priests were Sadducees who did not believe the resurrection nor angels nor spirits. This Sanhedrin was the decision-making body that governed Judea. They operated under the auspices of the Roman government. But Rome gave them a great deal of latitude, especially with religious issues.

The contents of their meeting is described in verses 47b-48. “‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the

Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”” They could not deny that Jesus had performed many miraculous signs. They sensed the surge in his popularity after raising Lazarus. They should have discussed the possibility that Jesus might be the Christ. But they had already made up their minds that he was not. They were not interested in the facts nor in the truth. Their unbelief was deliberate and it was getting worse every time they confronted Jesus’ life-giving power. Now they were frightened by Jesus, considering him a threat to national security. Unbelieving people are not indifferent to Jesus, the resurrection. They are enemies of Jesus. It is because they love to sin in the darkness under the power of death.

America has been characterized as a nation in a cultural conflict. There is a culture of life and there is a culture of death. These two cultures collide over issues like abortion and euthanasia. At the root, this cultural conflict is really a battle between those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. Those who believe in Jesus, the resurrection and the life, affirm life, holiness and hope in the kingdom of God. They pray for America to be a godly nation and a blessing to the world. Those who reject Jesus are under the power of death. They seek pleasure only for this life. They think the things of this world, like money and political power, are everything. They would be pleased to make America like Sodom and Gomorrah. May God help each of us to put our faith in Jesus and to live by resurrection faith. May God use each of us to plant resurrection faith in young people through one-to-one Bible study. May God’s life prevail over the culture of death in our nation.

Second, God is sovereign; God is good (49-53).

Look at verses 49-50. “Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’” While other Sanhedrin members seemed to be in a dilemma over what to do with Jesus, Caiaphas had a very clear solution. It was to put Jesus to death, claiming it was for the sake of the nation. Caiaphas held the office of high priest. He was called to be a shepherd for his people. But for the sake of saving his own position, under the guise of national security, he recommended that good Jesus, innocent Jesus, be put to death. The plot to kill Jesus, the greatest crime in human history, was initiated by the Jewish high priest.

On one hand, through this incident we can see the total depravity of fallen man. And yet, John’s perspective goes much deeper than this. John comments in verses 51-52, “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.” John says that Caiaphas’ words were prophetic. They were in fact God’s truth spoken and fulfilled. John did not see Caiaphas’ evil motive as the main factor behind the death of Jesus. John saw God behind Caiaphas. God held Caiaphas in his hand. Caiaphas’ prophecy fulfilled God’s will. God was sovereign; God was good, especially in the prophecy of Jesus’ death.

The world is not ruled by evil men. God rules the world and God is carrying out his good purpose for the salvation of mankind. In the Old Testament there is Joseph. Joseph lived a pure and holy life. Joseph especially loved his father Jacob and served him with all his heart. Then God gave Joseph beautiful dreams and revealed his great purpose for him. Then Joseph’s brothers hated him because his holy dreams exposed the pettiness and corruption of their own lives. So they sold him as a slave and lied to their father about it. Through their evil act, Joseph went from being like a holy prince in his father’s house to being a nameless slave in a foreign country. Joseph suffered much to overcome the language problem, cultural barriers, and idolatrous practices of the people in Egypt. Joseph was falsely charged with sexual harassment and put into prison. Joseph was mistreated and beaten again and again. Yet Joseph fixed his eyes on God and on God’s good purpose. In the course of time God exalted him as prime minister of Egypt and made him the shepherd for his brothers. Joseph helped them repent and accept God’s mission for them. At the end of his life Joseph told his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen 50:20). God is sovereign and God’s good purpose prevails over all the evil of mankind.

When Dr. Lee and Mother Barry began American campus ministry, God worked mightily and many students accepted Jesus. Then a self-appointed cult watchdog group began to target UBF. Their standard of judgment ignored the Bible completely and denied the authority of the Scripture. By means of now discredited sociological and psychological theories, mixed with many false accusations, they slandered UBF through the media to plant suspicion and doubt about the work of God. These enemies really intended to destroy UBF and make money in the process.

But God used them for good. Missionaries who confronted their persecution decided to work harder. Prayer became more fervent. The number of one-to-one Bible studies increased remarkably.

The persecution also worked as a catalyst to strengthen the faith of American shepherds. As 1 Peter 1:7 says, “These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” Now, scattered throughout the United States and Canada, there are godly house churches which are built upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ. There are Ph.D. shepherds who courageously witness to Christ in their campuses. North America will surely become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. It is just a matter of time. God uses persecution to accelerate the process. Therefore, we need not be upset at the enemies of God’s work. We must see God who is using even them to fulfill his own purpose. God is sovereign and God’s good purpose will prevail. Amen.

Third, Jesus died for the Jews and the scattered children of God (51-57).

Look again at verses 51-52. “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.” God’s good purpose was that Jesus would die for the sin of the world.

Among the special privileges of the high priest was the entering of the Most Holy Place once a year to present a blood sacrifice for the atonement of their sins. The Most Holy Place was God’s dwelling place. No one dared to go in there because the holy God could not endure their sinful presence. According to God’s word, only the high priest could go in there once a year with the blood of sacrifice. This was done to instruct us about the meaning of Christ’s coming. When Caiaphas spoke about Jesus’ death for the Jewish nation, God used him in the office of high priest, to present Jesus as the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world. Very soon, Jesus would die on the cross and shed his blood. Jesus’ blood has the power to cleanse our sins once and for all. Jesus’ blood is the full payment that satisfies God’s demand for justice. That is why, when Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Jesus’ death opened the way to God for all sinful mankind. Hebrews 10:19-22a says, “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith....” Now we can live in God’s presence through the blood of Jesus.

Jesus’ death was not only for the people of Israel, it was for the scattered children of God. This refers to the Gentiles who were scattered throughout the whole world. As we have seen through the study of Acts, apostles or missionaries carried the gospel message to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit sent the Apostle Paul to Macedonia where he met Lydia, a successful businesswoman. She accepted the word of God and became a believer. Paul went on to pioneer Corinth. It was a commercial city with a reputation for wild parties. Many Corinthians accepted the word of God and became Jesus’ people. They stopped drinking and dancing and began to pray and study the Bible. Paul pioneered Ephesus through intense discipleship training. The word of God worked with power and spread throughout Asia Minor. Many sorcerers and witches, those who practiced magic arts, repented with tears. Paul preached the gospel to Roman soldiers in the palace guard. They repented their brutality and selfishness and became holy men of God. The gospel of Jesus’ death for our sins has spread to scattered children of God down through the generations and even to us. Jesus’ death brings us together and makes us one. We could see this through the International Summer Bible Conference at MSU. Many people from many nations became one in Jesus. In Revelation, John sees the future vision of the children of God who stand united in the kingdom. Revelation 5:9-10 says, “And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’” In Jesus’ blood the scattered children of God find salvation from sin and restore their relationship with God. In Jesus’ blood, the children of God become one. Through the blood of Jesus shed for us, God restores the kingdom of God. This is the vision God wants us to have, even when, in reality, we see Caiaphas.

The prophecy of Caiaphas changed the atmosphere of Judea. Jesus could not move about publicly. He had to wait until the Passover, God’s time for his death. So Jesus withdrew to Ephraim with his disciples. In Jerusalem, there was a buzz about Jesus. People wondered where he was and what he was going to do.

In today's passage we learned that God is sovereign and God is good. God's purpose for world salvation will be accomplished and he will gather his scattered children from the corners of the earth, sanctify them through the blood of Jesus and make them one. May God help us to see what God is doing and live with glorious vision and great hope in our hearts even when we face real enemies in doing gospel work.