

**Exposing the Grand Conspiracy**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 11:53 -John 12:1**  
**October 27, 2013**

We'll be looking at the last five verses of John 11, and the first Verse of John 12 this morning.

Next month, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. One of the events, like many of those events that have shaken the culture and the fabric of America, that have been the subject of much speculation regarding conspiracy theories, cover-ups. We've heard about the speculation about a second shooter. Was there somebody on the grassy knoll? The movie '*JFK*' made hay out of this particular issue, and I'm not going to argue that. I don't want to talk about that, but it is just to point out that this idea of conspiracy theory is something that seems indigenous to fallen man. Partly because I think we know there really is some kind of conspiracy going on.

Now sometimes people have made ridiculous, clearly ridiculous speculations about conspiracy theories. People that say the Holocaust, for instance, is this made up event, it didn't happen. How ridiculous is that? Absurd! Or people that act like we really weren't on the moon. You've heard people talk about that, that it was all a hoax. One of the more bizarre ones in recent years was that the World Trade Center was actually a U.S. operation. We bombed our own buildings to start a war. You can see this stuff on the Internet, there is so much nonsense out there.

Now there have been real conspiracies, cover-ups. Watergate, a lot of CIA involvement in other places that were not supposed to be happening, covered up for a period of time, later exposed. Other things that we are not sure about, speculative things. One of the areas that I think a lot of effort and energy is expended in Christian circles, even in the discussion of the New World Order. Things pointed out like the Federal Reserve Banking System, and why that started. Masonic symbols in Washington D.C., and all these things. The Trilateral Commission, the UN. I would say all of these things make a lot of sense, and it shouldn't be so surprising, it shouldn't be so sensational actually to Christians because if we read our Bibles carefully, we know there is a *Grand Conspiracy*. The *Grand Conspiracy* is centered upon eclipsing and blocking the glory of God. Satan is the architect of that conspiracy and it has been going on since the garden when he brought into question the character of God by casting doubt upon the word of God. "Has God said...?" And then he lied about God.

That is the great conspiracy that is really the root issue in that it is the one conspiracy about which we should be concerned. I'm not saying the others don't have some place, but they should be minor concerns. I get concerned actually, I've noticed a lot of this. I've heard some from friends that are dealing with the impact of a lot of Christian leaders that are spending time talking about stuff like the way Washington D.C. is laid out, and all of that. Like, "Christians need to stay away from that." That's nonsense, we have nothing to fear of Washington. Walking in Washington D.C. is not going to hurt your spirituality. All of the occultic symbols that are out there you don't have to be afraid of. If you are in Jesus Christ, you have been delivered from the domain of darkness, and translated to the Kingdom of His Son. The wicked one touches you not! So don't be worried about this nonsense, but understand the times. Understand the reality that yeah, there is a conspiracy. Satan is at work, and the method with which we should deal with that conspiracy is the same that it has always been. We're going to see in our text this morning is exactly what we see exposed. I have titled the message this morning, 'Exposing the Grand Conspiracy', John 11:53-12:1.

Let's read those verses together. Now remember, this is right after Lazarus' resurrection. Some of the people that were there have reported back to the Pharisees and the chief priests, and we read this about them in Verse 53:

***John 11:53-12:1 ~***

***53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.***

***54 Therefore Jesus 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.***

***55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 So 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?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.***

***1 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.***

Let's pray together.

*Father, as we come to Your word, we come Lord, aware of our great need, aware that our minds need to be instructed by You. That in our lostness, and in this world system, we've received so much bad programming that we need the Spirit to take the word, and to apply it to our minds, and our hearts, and our lives. We pray that You might have Your way, that Jesus Christ might be exalted. And we pray in His name, Amen.*

There is a Grand Conspiracy. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that the god of this age has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. The conspiracy is to keep the truth about God covered up, and the way that that is done is to keep the truth about Jesus Christ covered up. That is exactly what we see happening on the pages of Scripture here in John 11, the passage we just read. The irony here is that the cover-up extends not just out there into the unbelieving, well it is the unbelieving world, but the professed unbelieving world. The cover-up extends into those who profess to believe because here we are talking about the spiritual leaders of the Jews, the chief priests, those in charge with the worship of God. The Pharisees, the teachers of Israel, they are the ones conspiring to hide the truth about Christ. That's what we see here. That's not something that happened only once, it happens in every generation.

In fact, we mentioned that the reformation celebration is happening this week. October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed the statement of '95 Statements of Protest' up on the castle door, the castle church, the front door, to say, "These are things that, as I look at the Scriptures, that the church seems out of line on," and he was hoping to start a dialogue. He was a reformer. In fact, we call it the Reformation because it was an attempt to *reform* the church. It wasn't an attempt to, originally, to start a new church, it was an attempt to reform the church. He put that up there in good faith, hoping that it would create dialogue, and that eventually that dialogue would extend all the way from Wittenberg to Rome, and he would get the people in leadership looking at the Scriptures, and just considering the claims that he was making, and help instruct him from the word. "Let's discuss this from the word." Instead, what he received was a cover-up, and the Catholic Church rejected the reformation, and rejected it in the same kind of venomous way that the leaders of the Nation of Israel did. They did it with a murderous rage, and set out to kill Luther, and kill everyone who held to his doctrine. So hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds were burned at the stake over the next 50 years.

So I want us to look at this passage, and I want to talk about the Reformation because there is so much encouragement through that too. We're going to look at the text, we're going to consider what we see from the text. Look at how the Reformation illustrates it all with the goal of seeing how we ought to respond to this still ongoing battle that is out there for the truth of the Gospel. I want us to consider this message under three points this morning. 'Exposing the Grand Conspiracy' is the title. We're going to look first at the reality of the conspiracy. Secondly, the results of the conspiracy. And thirdly, the response to the conspiracy.

### 1) The Reality of the Conspiracy:

Now first, the reality of the conspiracy. There in Verse 53, ***So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.*** 'Planned together', those two English words translate one Greek word in the text, and the word means 'to deliberate, to counsel, to consider, discuss, and to resolve, or to decide'. It is a word that is not used often in the New Testament. There is another word that is used more often to speak of this kind of will. Sometimes this word can be translated 'will', but this is 'will as deliberation'. The other word that is used more often is 'will and action'. This word speaks of the process by which they came to decide. That is why the idea of conspiracy, they were *conspiring* about, "What are we going to do about Jesus?" John has led us into this, the previous passage we read a couple of weeks ago when we were in here in John 11. We saw that Caiaphas, and the chief priests, and Pharisees had convened a council, Verse 47 and following. What they were talking about was the fact that the man, Jesus, was performing many signs. He was doing many miracles, and this was in response to this greatest miracle, this new high water mark when He raised a man from the dead. They basically said, "If we let Him go on like this, we are going to lose our place, and the Romans are going to take over. Everybody is going to believe in Him." So the religious leaders didn't want people to believe in the One God sent. They were committed to maintaining their place, therefore they chose to do everything they could to put an end to Jesus.

In Verse 53, our text this morning says that that decisive moment happened as they continued to discuss it. It came to the point where they said, "We must kill Him." Now it is interesting, we know that a theme in John's Gospel has been, several times already they've picked up stones to kill Him. In the heat of the moment, this rage, and this murderous hatred would just explode. They picked up stones in John 10, they picked up stones in John 8, but here, now, a final, deliberative, thought through decision has happened. The idea is they've weighed the evidence and they've made a decision. That is what this word means. They looked at all the factors. It means the decision to kill Jesus is a knowing decision, it is a willful

blindness. They know He is doing signs, they know He's done this miracle, and yet they will not believe. That such is the hatred and the opposition to the truth, and ultimately the hatred of God among the spiritual leadership in that day.

In fact, that word is used again. To show you the lengths they are committed to to put an end to this revelation of God through Christ. The same word occurs twice in John, here in 11:53, *...they planned together....*, but over in Chapter 12, Verse 10, *...the chief priests planned....*, the same word. *...the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;...* They decided they were going to kill Jesus and they were going to kill Lazarus. This is the spiritual leadership. These are the people who are supposed to be shepherding the souls of those, that Nation of Israel, and they are conspiring together to kill Him.

This means that they've already rendered the verdict. The trial will just be a sham, a show. When they arrest Him, it is just to execute Him, it is not to try Him. We see that carried out later in John 18. So what we see is, and I think what is happening here, remember John is carefully crafting His Gospel, including exactly what he wants, just like all the other Gospel-writers do, but John is careful to tell us that at the end of his Gospel. "I could have written about many things that Jesus did, but the things that I've written are so that you may believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing you may have life in His name. I have been very selective," is what he is saying in recounting to you key events from His life. The question we have to ask here is why is he recounting to us this conspiratorial decision of the chief priests and the Pharisees? What is his purpose? I mean, theologically, why did he take the space on the paper to show this?

Remember, I think we get inside into this when we think about his original audience. For those of you who may be newer, or with us as guests today, John is a Jew, as all the apostles were, and his heart is beating for unbelieving Jews and Jewish proselytes. That is, that his main focus in writing his Gospel is to reach unbelieving Jews, and Jewish proselytes, that is Gentiles who converted to Judaism who were at various synagogues throughout the Roman world. By and large, when John writes around 85 or 90 A.D., 50 to 60 years after crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the majority of Jews have rejected Christ. The religious leadership as a whole rejected Him, and continued to reject Him, as most of the Jewish people did. So John writes his Gospel as another attempt to shine the light that these people might be saved. I think what he is doing is he is saying, "Look! Look at who you are following!" He is saying, "Test your leadership. Look at the leaders. The reason you are rejecting Christ is you know that all of the Pharisees

have rejected Him. The priests have rejected Him. The synagogue leaders in your town have rejected Him. Well let me tell you about the spiritual leadership of Israel and how corrupt it is.” So he is exposing, he is bringing to light this conspiracy that really ties in with that Grand Conspiracy of all time, but this conspiracy to put the clamps on the truth about Jesus. Their goal is to keep the truth concealed.

That is what we see in this, the reality of the conspiracy. The goal is to keep the truth concealed. That has always been Satan’s strategy—conceal the truth, cover the truth, distract from the truth. The reason many anti-Christ’s have gone out into the world, and so many false religions are out there, if the Lord tarries and we are here for another 500 years, I’m not expecting that, but if He were to tarry and we’re here for another 500 years, we’ll probably have 100,000 more religions. I’m probably over the number a little bit there, but it feels like that. New religions all the time because anything but the truth. Anything but the truth, and Satan is a master deceiver. His goal is to keep the truth concealed. It has always been that way, and this last straw, I mean they are sitting there with this miracle that should be trumpeted. They should be going around telling people what Christ has done. God has sent someone that can raise the dead. God has sent someone that can open the eyes of the blind. All of these things resonated with the Old Testament to say, “Messiah has come!” and these guys knew their Bibles. They had been reading their Bibles, but they had not really been humbly bowing before God. They did not love God, they hated God. When God showed up on the scene, their hatred for the God that they pretended to worship, when they were face to face with Him, their venomous hatred came out, and they nailed Him to the cross.

But that strategy of keeping the truth concealed. That was the same strategy that Satan employed during the time of medieval Christianity. Keep the truth concealed. It is really certain that the foundational shift that happened in the life of the reformers, Luther first, and then others, the foundational shift was when they came to see the word of God because the Catholic Church had concealed the truth. For centuries, people were going to church, just imagine this, think about this for a moment. Imagine if you were here, I mean you are here, imagine if you were here, what would it be like? If you were here and I came up, and every Sunday, when it came time for the sermon, I got up here and started speaking Portuguese, and preached the whole message in Portuguese? Does anybody know Portuguese? I tried to pick a language nobody knows. Good, okay. That’s what church was like in the middle ages. You would come to church and the whole service was in Latin. The only problem was nobody spoke Latin. Latin was a dead language.

Most of the priests, though they could read it, because I could read Portuguese. If you wanted to hand me a Portuguese book next week, we won't do that, but we could. I could read the Portuguese because they use our alphabet. I could make the sounds, A, B, C. That's what the priests would do. They would read the Bible in Latin. They would recite the prayers in Latin, and the people are out there not knowing what in the world is being said, but feeling like there is some kind of mystical, magical thing going on. The truth was concealed and the glory of Christ was eclipsed, because how do you come to know about Christ? There is one way that God has ordained to let you come to know about Jesus Christ, and it is in this book. It is not in having a mystical experience. It is not in going off and imagining that Jesus is with you. No, it is in this book. Genesis to Revelation, He makes Himself known. That is why He said in John 5:39, a few chapters back, "You search the Scriptures, (talking to the Pharisees) for in them you think you have life, but these they are that testify of Me." He is saying the whole Old Testament is about Jesus. It is! And the whole New Testament is about Jesus. So where do we find Jesus in the preaching, and teaching, and reading, and studying of the word of God? If you can't preach the word in people's language, or teach the word in their language, they can't read it in their language, they cannot, and will not find Jesus.

That was the reason John Wycliffe died. This was before the reformation. He is called the morning star of the reformation. Wycliffe lived in the 1400's in England. Now he learned Latin, there were people who knew Latin. I don't mean to imply that everybody didn't know Latin. There were certainly some priests who knew Latin. Some people, educated people, knew Latin, but by and large the masses had no idea what was going on in church. John Wycliffe, an Englishman, had the audacity to think that the Bible ought to be understood by the common people, and what he did was he translated the Bible from Latin into English, and for that he died. Isn't that amazing? That's why he died.

William Tyndale died for the same reason. They didn't want the Bible in the language of the people because they felt like the Bible was too dangerous for the average person. That the average person would corrupt the word of God, and the reality is, the Bible is too dangerous in one sense for every single human being that has ever lived, other than one, Jesus Christ. Because we all, in our darkened minds, in our wicked, sinful natures, would twist and distort everything. But God has willed that through this book He changes hearts and lives, gives His Spirit, and then He takes the plowboy, like Tyndale said, and makes him a scholar in God. That is the glory of what God does in His word.

So the goal was keep the truth concealed. It wasn't the knowing goal. I don't think it was the knowing goal of these people in John's Gospel. I don't think they really thought they were concealing the truth about God. They were not conscious fully of that. I mean, Jesus talks about, earlier in Matthew's Gospel, He says, "They're going to kill you, and they are going to think they are doing a service for God." The deceitfulness of sin is that we are self-deceived, and these people were self-deceived. They thought they were doing God a favor when they killed the Son of God. So those who opposed the Bible being taught in the language of the people thought they were doing a service, they were protecting the ignorant and misguided from the dangers of handling something so precious. But the problem was, they didn't really, if they had just thought about it, and what God had done, they would have known that God always intended His word to be in the language of the common people.

This is something where if you have an opportunity to talk to Roman Catholics, most Roman Catholics aren't that informed about their faith. Many of them aren't, but you'll find some, especially if you find people that have converted from Protestantism to Catholicism, they're more informed about things. And one of the things that I think we need to ask them and impress upon them is why do they think the Bible doesn't need to be in the language of the people? I mean, they now have moderated that position. About 50 years ago, the Vatican too, they finally relented and said the Bible can be taught in the language, though they're careful to make sure that you read your Catechism with it so you don't just do this willy-nilly with your Bible, and the Spirit, and just reason.

When you think about how God gave His word, God has given His word—over a 1,500 year period He gave us this Book, from 1,400 B.C. to 100 A.D., and the first 39 books, the Old Testament, are given to us predominantly in Hebrew. That was the language the people spoke. God didn't give it in a secret language just that He also gave to His leaders. "Moses, you and I are going to talk only, and I don't want them to see the word." No, God said, "Write it down, Moses. Give it to them." Not only that, but God gave His word—when we were studying through Daniel a few years ago, it just struck me how amazing it was that the main part of the book of Daniel is not in Hebrew, but in Aramaic. The heart of the book is in the language not of the Hebrews but in the language of the Babylonians. That is, that God inspired a book to be written—while Daniel was in Babylon, part of it's in Hebrew, the beginning and the end, and the heart of it, 6 chapters, Chapter 2 to Chapter 7 is in Aramaic. He took His word, His holy word, and He meant it to be proclaimed in the language of the ungodly unbelievers.



Then He gives His New Testament, and He doesn't give it in Hebrew, though all the apostles are Jewish, but He gives it in Greek, the language of the people throughout the Roman Empire. He wants His word to go as far and wide as it can, and not only that, He doesn't just give it in Greek, but He gives it in Koine Greek. Koine is a word which means common or vulgar. Vulgar, not in the sense that we use it sometimes to mean *bad* language, but vulgar means *common* language, the normal sort of speech of the everyday person. God gave His New Testament in Koine Greek.

In fact, a neat story is Augustine who later became a great hero of the faith, before he was converted, could not believe that God would have spoken that way. He was a young man, a scholar in his day, and he could not believe that if God was going to give His word, He would have stooped to give it in the lowly Koine. Certainly He would have spoken in classical Greek, the high and elevated beautiful language. And this was really a stumbling block for him. He couldn't believe that God would be that base and crude to speak in the language of the common people, but then he later came to see that God was that humble and lowly that He'd reached all the way down.

Now, think about this for a moment. Now you're in 1400 A.D. . What do you think God wants His word to be in? Do you think He wants it locked away in a holy language like Latin? He wants it in the language of the people. He has done everything to show us that, and so that's clear. The reality of the conspiracy though, Satan, and again, these people are not intending to hurt people, I don't think. In their minds they've deceived themselves. They think they're doing what is right, but they're not looking to the word to correct them. That's the reality of the conspiracy in Verse 53.

## 2) The Results of the Conspiracy:

Now Verses 54 to 56, back to the text of John. After they plan to kill Him, then we have this interesting statement about Jesus, and I want you to notice there's emphasis on where Jesus is and where He goes, and where the people are and where they go. And what you have is the people and Jesus basically passing like ships in the night, missing one another. Look at this in Verse 54:

***John 11:54 ~ Therefore Jesus 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.***

It kind of layers prepositional phrase after prepositional phrase. In fact, when it says *...went away from there...* that is in itself emphatic. The verb *went away* is a good translation. It's *went away*. It could have said *He went from there* or *He left*, or *but went away*, but he adds *from there*. *...to the country...* that is, the uninhabited regions, the untilled ground, the wilderness, and then: *...near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim;* So Jesus has left Bethany. He was in Bethany which is 2 miles south of Jerusalem. He was in the metro area of Jerusalem, in a sense. He's left there now to go out into the country because of the conspiracy, because the time is not yet right for Him to die. But it's interesting then John bothers to tell us about the Jews who come to Jerusalem in Verse 55 and Verse 56.

***John 11:55 ~ Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.***

Where has Jesus gone? He went from Jerusalem to the country. Where have these people gone? From the country to Jerusalem, and then Verse 56:

***John 11:56 ~ So 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?"***

Basically what you have here is this irony. Jesus leaves because of the conspiracy, because the time is not yet right. He leaves, the people are coming, and they're seeking Jesus, but He's nowhere to be found. Why? It's because of the conspiracy. I think also it's interesting that he points out that they're seeking to purify themselves, in verse 55. Now, this is ceremonial purification for Passover. If someone had made themselves ceremonially unclean by touching a dead body, they needed to be ceremonially cleansed before they could celebrate the Passover.

So they needed to go early because it took some time to go through that. But it's interesting he bothers to tell us about this at all. Why this dialogue? I think this irony, is a subtle irony in the background. He's wanting the Jews who are reading this in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century to see, look, the religious leaders were opposing and covering up the glory of who Christ was, and the people who they were supposed to be shepherding and helping to find God, in reality, they were keeping from God, because that's what's happened. Jesus was in the temple. If they wanted to come to the temple to see Jesus, then Jesus had been in the temple. He had been in Jerusalem. If they wanted to be cleansed, who could cleanse them better than Jesus?

So the irony that is the result of the conspiracy is that for a time, they're keeping the people from Jesus. They can't find Jesus. They can't find purification. The spiritual leadership who is cooperating in the conspiracy is separating God from His people even as they proclaim that they're connecting God to the people.

This is what happened also in the Reformation. There were so many results of that initial problem of hiding the word. Concealing the truth led to all kinds of perversion doctrinally. You see this when you read the history or watch movies about it, the reality of what went on, the selling of indulgences. It still happens today even, but it happened then too, the idea that you can pay a certain amount of money and that will lessen your time in purgatory. That's an indulgence. You buy an indulgence. You can buy an indulgence for the dead. Give money to the Catholic Church and then your time in purgatory or the time of your loved one in purgatory is cut down. Penance is the idea that once you sin, you can be made right with God again, in that when you've committed a mortal sin, you have to do certain acts to be right with God. You've got to say so many Hail Marys. You've got to do certain things, pray a number of prayers over a number of days, and then you will now be restored to fellowship with God.

Purgatory itself is the idea that after a person dies, they spend an undisclosed amount of time burning and being purified. That's what purgatory is, is just a doctrine of the Catholic Church. Where did this come from? It came from the fact that the Bible had been concealed, that they were adding things to it and looking to other documents than the word of God. All of these things do dishonor to Christ and keep people away from God. In the name of finding Him, they lose Him. Someone comes to a priest and says, "How can I be right with God? I've sinned. I need to be right with God." The priest says, "Say seven Hail Marys a day for the next two weeks, do this, do that, and you'll be right with God." You've made them farther away from God than ever before. Everything about Medieval Catholicism obscured the glory of Christ. Even as they claim to worship Him in the host in the heresy of transubstantiation, thinking that the bread and the wine were literally the body and blood of Christ, failing to interpret correctly just the Bible. As they pretend to worship, they are practicing idolatry and keeping people from really seeing Christ.

One of the ways you see this is that in Catholic churches, one of the things the Protestants did is when the gospels were recovered, when the word of God came clear and they saw, "Wait a minute, the way you see Jesus—the Lord's Supper is a thing that God has given, but it's a secondary thing that's added to the word. The preaching of the word is the main way you see Christ," it's like Jesus said, "The

whole Bible testifies about Me.” So in the preaching of the word, He is lifted up. Well, when the Protestants saw this, they took the pulpit and moved it from the side of the church and put it in the center. In Catholic churches and some other quasi-Protestant churches, you’ll find that the table is in the center, that is, the table here is in the center and the pulpit is off to the side. We happen to have the table in the center, but it’s below the pulpit, because this is where Christ is revealed, in the word of God, and all of those things obscured or eclipsed Jesus. All of the false doctrines like the treasury of merit, the idea that the saints have extra merit to get them into heaven, and if you do an indulgence, you’re actually getting merit from the saints, their extra merit, to give you so that you can now have enough righteousness to get to heaven. Do you not see what a blasphemous doctrine that is?

That says that Jesus Christ’s work is insufficient. The blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse a million worlds of sin. His blood could cleanse us a billion times over and still have more and more and more to give. His righteousness is that powerful, and the word of God makes that clear. He came to save us once for all from sin. Pray to the saints, pray to Mary, they were encouraged to do, and still are. Pray to Mary because she understands. Pray to the saints because they can relate to you. When you’ve got a certain need, pray to this saint or that saint. Jesus Christ is our High Priest. *He’s* the one we’re to pray to. He’s the one we’re to go to. There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. So the irony is that the result of the conspiracy, when you try to keep the truth concealed, you keep people from finding God even as they think they’re finding Him.

### 3) The Response to the Conspiracy:

We’ve seen the reality, we’ve seen the result, and now the response to the conspiracy. You see this in a subtle way in Verse 1 of Chapter 12:

***John 12:1 ~ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.***

The question kind of highlights this before. “Do you think He’s going to come to the feast at all? I mean, do you think He’s even going to come?” Because they know there’s a death sentence that it’s now been decreed that anybody that knows about Him is to report it so they can arrest Him. They’re thinking He’s not. Not only does He come, He comes on His time. He wasn’t going to come before the right time. We see the sovereignty of God in that, and that’s why Jesus said in John 10, “I lay down My life. No one takes it from Me.” It’s on His time, at His place,

but the fact that He comes to Jerusalem through Bethany, I think this is a very gracious, in your face, sort of thing. “You’re upset that I raised Lazarus? You’re upset that My glory was revealed in such a way? I’m going to come to Jerusalem by way of Bethany. I’m going to come fully reminding everyone of what I did in Bethany, because My glory is about to be set on display in an even bigger way than you guys have any idea.” So there’s this sense in which Jesus, in coming through Bethany, is boldly unveiling His glory.

Now, what this means is the response to the conspiracy, what is it that we need to do in a world that is filled with deception, filled with all kinds of foolishness? We need to preach Christ. This is the biggest thing you can do under any conspiracy is just preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This will go to the root of every other conspiracy. That’s why we don’t need to be that worried about the others. We need to be worried about this one. We need to proclaim Christ, and the way you proclaim Christ is you preach and teach, speak the word of God, encourage people with the word of God, talk about the word of God, and you show them in the word of God, Jesus Christ.

I love the quote by Martin Luther. Basically what happened to Luther is he learned the Bible, and he learned Greek and Hebrew, and he studied the Bible in Greek and Hebrew, and he got into the word, and he saw how even the Latin translation had perverted some key doctrines, and when he saw the original, he came to understand that we’re saved by grace through faith, that God looks at us, and he sees us and our sin is so great that no mere works of penance and things like that could cover such wickedness. It’s also an overestimation of how good we are. We need a much more radical salvation than things like paying money. Our sin is so great that we need a great Savior.

Luther saw that our sin was so great, and that Jesus was so wonderful, that His blood shed in our place cleanses us for eternity, that Him living a perfect life, 33 years of perfection, being tempted in every way, yet without sin, that He established a perfect record of obedience, and then in that sinless spotlessness, He offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice. God transferred all of the guilt of all who would ever believe, upon Christ, and punished Him in our place, and poured out His fierce wrath against Him, and the way He poured out His wrath was allowing evil to go unchecked and to just assault the soul of the Son of God, and that’s what was happening on the cross, and that’s why He says those triumphant words, “It is finished! Paid in full.” The whole debt of sin is paid for all time. Nothing needs to be done.

In fact, at the moment He breathed His last was the moment of victory. Matthew is careful to tell us that when Jesus breathed His last, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, that is, the veil that separated the Holy Place where the priests were, from the Holy of Holies where the high priest could only go once a year, because that was the true dwelling place of God. The veil was torn from top to bottom at the instant Jesus died. Everything that had needed to be done was done when He died. Nothing more, no more sacrifices for sin. And then His resurrection on Sunday just proved that that was it.

So Luther sees that. He comes to understand all of his efforts to be right with God through the various Catholic approaches had born no relief to the guilt that he had, and finally he came to see Christ as He is, and he was transported, liberated, overjoyed, and he set about preaching this message of this Book, and he and others who he preached to and who followed after him just kept preaching the word, and all that we need to do is preach the word. We don't need to be so preoccupied by what they're doing, what Satan is doing. Just preach the word. Listen to this quote from Luther near the end of his life. He says:

*Take me, for example. I opposed indulgences and all papist errors, but never by force.*

There's a very big difference between Luther and their approach. They did oppose by force, but Luther says, "Never by force." What was his method?

*I simply taught, preached, and wrote the word of God, otherwise I did nothing, and then while I slept, the word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The word did it all.*

The word of God. Just the unleashing of the truth of God, because when you study the Bible, when you teach the Bible, when you talk about the Bible, when you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, when you share back and forth about the word, what's happening is God is revealing the glory of Christ. We're seeing the sufficiency of Christ, the beauty of Christ. People get saved, and we who are saved are being transformed continually into His image as we ground ourselves in the word of God. This means that really just by way of application, there are three things that we need to do in responding to the grand conspiracy. We need to be filled with the word of God. We should fill our hearts and minds continually with the word of God. Then as we are being filled with the word of God, that's a daily process. We're hearing the word of God taught, we're teaching the word of God, we're sharing the word of God, we're in the word of God.

Then as we're in the word of God, we're also secondly, not just being filled, but be focused. Be focused on Christ. Don't just read the word to have knowledge, but read the word to see Christ. Like Charles Spurgeon talked about, whenever he preached a passage, his practice was to understand the passage in its context, to explain the passage, and then make a beeline for the cross, because all of Scripture is ultimately aimed at Jesus anyway. So be filled, be focused, and then be faithful. Be faithful to proclaim it, to share it.

What people need is not to know how bad the deceptions are. They don't need us to talk about the conspiracies. "Oh, have you heard about what's happening over there?" They don't need that. What they need is to hear about Jesus Christ, and when they hear about Jesus Christ, they're delivered from everything else. It all falls away, because we know the One—even though the world is impressive and the things of this world are impressive just like it was prayed earlier, the kingdom of God starts out as a small stone, but it becomes a mountain that fills the earth, and it's the simple preaching of the word, something that seems so unimpressive outwardly, the teaching of the Bible, the sharing of this Book that is now almost 2,000 years old, and the sharing of this Book is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and it transforms. It delivers people from the domain of darkness, and transfers them to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Let us not be distracted by anything else. There are other ways that people in the church try to distract us with other things than the word of God, with all kinds of excitement, new things always coming along. All we need is the word of the living God. Study it, hear it, and as we do, love the Savior and be faithful to Him.

Let's pray together...

*Father, we rejoice this morning that though all men are like grass, and the glory of man is like the flower of the field, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever, and it is that word which was preached to us, it is that word which gives new life, and it is that word which makes us to dwell eternally forever in Your presence. Father, we pray that You would make us people who are always hungry for Your word, who are heeding Your command, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it," who understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We pray that You would help us be people who are so satisfied by the richness of Your word, so nourished by the beauty of Christ and the glory of our Savior, that we have strength and joy and boldness and compassion to speak Your truth more and more widely and happily. We praise You for our great Savior, and we pray in His marvelous Name, Amen.*

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.