

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #46

John 11:47-57

There are some people who believe that if they could just see a miracle they would really believe. In fact, we may remember when Lazarus and the rich man died, the rich man, who was in Hades asked to have someone appear back from the dead so his family members would believe. He was told that his family members have the Word of God and the law of Moses and if they cannot see themselves as sinners who need to believe in Jesus Christ as their only God/Savior for salvation, they would certainly not believe no matter what the miracle (Luke 16:19-31).

Whenever God is glorified by something or someone, Satan hates it. **There is nothing that gives God more glory than His non-works grace system.** God's grace takes man completely out of the picture. God's grace is not deserved and it is not earned. It gives God all the glory and Satan's goal is to get rid of any thing and any one who brings glory to God. **Naturally since Jesus Christ is the grace of God (John 1:17), Satan wants to destroy Him.** Jesus Christ was traveling to various regions in the Middle East and telling people all they had to do to be saved was to believe on Him. That is it. No matter what the sin, no matter who the sinner, God's grace would forgive any one of any sin, but it was only by faith in Him. Satan's goal is to get people into eternal condemnation by believing otherwise. He wants people to think that they can be right with a Holy God by trying to turn over a new leaf in life or by trying to be good. But now that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, he could see that many were believing that He was the only way to having life. So his plan is to get rid of Jesus Christ and he will use religious people to do it. John's Gospel is unique in that about one half of it deals with Christ's final days on earth.

John 11 reveals the majestic Deity of Jesus Christ, but it also reveals the total depravity of the human heart. But even in this, God is sovereign and actually controls what Satan is allowed to do. At this point, Satan wants Jesus Christ dead. In fact, he wanted anyone who truly reflected God's glory dead. Never is that more evident than when we come to this text in John's gospel.

Jesus Christ had just performed the most spectacular miracle of His earthy ministry. He walked into Bethany and went to a cemetery and verbally commanded a dead person to come back to life four days after he had been buried and Lazarus walked right out of that grave. As a result, there were some who believed on Him (11:45). It was a tremendous God glorifying moment, but there were others who wanted Him dead. When you look at this text what we see is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST DEMONSTRATED THAT HE HAD THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE TO THOSE DEAD, MANY BELIEVED ON HIM BUT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS MET TOGETHER AND DECIDED THEY NEEDED TO KILL JESUS CHRIST AND EVERY BIT OF THIS WAS SOVEREIGNLY SCRIPTED BY GOD .

That is clearly what you see when you come to this passage of Scripture. Lazarus had been raised from the dead by the power of God. He was living proof of the fact that Jesus Christ has the power over death. He has the Divine ability to give life to one dead.

Many Jews were believing on Jesus Christ because of Lazarus' physical existence. In fact, his very existence caused great trouble because you could not deny it. It reached such a troubling point that the religious leaders wanted Lazarus dead also (12:9-11).

There is a lot of action in these verses. This section may be broken down nicely into five main actions:

ACTION #1 – The religious leaders meet together to discuss what to do with Jesus. **11:47-48**

These religious leaders knew His message of grace and His works were opposite of theirs. What we have here is a major religious board meeting and the meeting has one item on its agenda - **how do we get rid of Jesus Christ.**

Carefully notice the interest groups named in **verse 47** - chief priests and Pharisees convene a council meeting or a Sanhedrin meeting. **Typically these two groups did not get along, but when there is an attack against the grace of God and the truth of God, there is always an ecumenical uniting of false religions and false religious people.**

These are religious leaders meeting to see how they can stop people from getting into a right relationship with God through the truth of believing on Jesus Christ. They are meeting to come up with a plan to promote their religion that will send people to eternal condemnation. Their plan is to eliminate the One presenting the truth of God.

Think of this, these are the most powerful religious leaders in the world. They publicly appear wearing their beautiful religious clothing and give the impression they are pious men of God. The chief priests, who were Sadducees, were in their expensive priestly robes and the Pharisees were the scholarly holy men who had their phylacteries (leather pouches) with Bible verses in them. This would be an impressive religious council meeting to see. But this coalition is satanic. This religious gathering is evil. **They want Jesus Christ and the truth of God's grace wiped off the face of the earth.**

Their own testimony at this meeting tells us exactly what was happening (11:47-48):

(Testimony #1) - Jesus was performing many miraculous signs . **11:47b**

Now the startling fact is they acknowledge they are not capable of doing anything like Jesus is doing. They begin the meeting by saying - He does sign miracles and we sure don't. What they are saying is we have been big important religious people for years and we can't do anything like Jesus can do and he is beginning to take away our clout. The bottom line of this is that they are jealous. He can do things they cannot do. Had they humbled themselves, they would have been able to do some amazing things too, just as the apostles did, but these proud religious leaders were not about to humble themselves even to God.

Jesus was doing the miraculous. This is a fact. They knew it and had seen it. They admit it. They are intentionally ignoring the evidence that is right before their very eyes. **Instead of saying, He is the One we need to believe, they say, He is the One we need to kill .**

(Testimony #2) - All people could potentially believe in Him if they let Him continue. **11:48a**

Notice carefully what the matter of salvation is, which these religious leaders clearly know - “believing in Jesus Christ.” These religious leaders knew exactly what one needed to do to be saved from sin. They know it is not by their works or laws or religion and yet, in spite of all His miracles which prove He is the only God/Savior, they were not about to believe on Him. They would rather rely on their works or the O.T. Law or their own religious beliefs than to simply trust Jesus Christ for their salvation. **The truth is they are so proud they would rather rely upon themselves for salvation, which will not lead to salvation, but to condemnation.**

(Testimony #3) - The Romans would take away their place and nation. **11:48b**

This part of the verse is so interesting for two key reasons: **First**, they think that if people believe in Jesus Christ, Rome will destroy them, and the actual reason God allowed Rome to destroy them is because they did not believe on Jesus Christ. **Second**, we may recall that they had previously claimed that they were subject to no one and right here this same group admits they are subject to the Romans (John 8:33). These religious leaders are living a delusional lie.

Now there is no doubt that Pilate was a ruthless Roman leader. According to Dr. Luke, he was not opposed to destroying any form of uprising that was a threat to Roman power (i.e. Luke 13:1). Rome could and would squash the Jewish religion and nation like a bug if there was word that a King of Israel was in power. However, if the King was God, Rome could not touch Israel. The religious leaders should have said - Jesus is God, let's help promote the entire nation to believe in Him and He will deliver us. **If a person refuses to believe on Jesus Christ, he is in the process of destroying himself.**

What we see at the end of **verse 48** is the real cause of their hatred - **they were all losing their clout**. These were proud, powerful, prosperous religious men. They were prominent and political. They could not stand the thought that one far greater than them was now on the scene.

These religious leaders were not interested in people being right with God, they were interested in themselves. If the Romans thought that all the Jewish people believed that Jesus Christ was the God/Savior/Messiah, then they (Romans) might put these religious frauds out of business.

The eternal tragedy of this is that these religious leaders are actually trying to figure out how to keep the Jews from knowing the truth that can save them from their sins. Had they really been interested in the people being right with God, they would have encouraged all people to believe in Jesus Christ as the only God/Savior/Messiah.

ACTION #2 – Caiaphas, the high priest, offers a God directed solution. **11:49-52**

Caiaphas was the ruthless high priest in Jerusalem. He was a corrupt politician. He knew how to use the religious and political system to kill the Holy Son of God.

The idea John presents by repeating Caiaphas was high priest “that year” (**11:49, 51; 18:13**) is he was the high priest the year Jesus Christ died. He is the religious kingpin behind the murder of Jesus Christ.

He was a Sadducee and not a Pharisee (Acts 23:6-10). What I find so interesting is that Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection and the reason they are meeting together is because Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. It was a fact, someone had been raised from the dead and rather than say our religious beliefs are wrong, they decide to kill the One who has a different religious belief.

Now Caiaphas makes some true statements here that are prophetic and true and I am convinced for the most part, he doesn't have a clue as to the significance of any of this. I believe God is sovereignly causing words to roll out of his mouth. Truth is, there was never a time in his life when he spoke truer words. Actually he spoke inspired words even though he didn't know it.

(Statement #1) - You know nothing at all. **11:49c**

Here is a good way to open up a meeting with your colleagues. This is certainly not a meeting in which Caiaphas is speaking in a way that is "politically correct." The Greek is very emphatic here and could be translated "you not know nothing" (υμεις ουκ οιδατε ουδεν). Caiaphas is really putting these boys down. But I believe God is speaking truth through Caiaphas, the truth is these religious leaders did not know anything about God. They did not know God and they did not know how people could be right with God.

(Statement #2) - You do not consider that it is advantageous for one man to die for the people so that the whole nation not perish. **11:50-52**

There have been times when God has spoken His word through some very corrupt people such as through Balaam, a satanic leader who led Israel away from the true God in the book of Numbers. God spoke some glorious prophetic truth through him (Numbers 23-24). In the same way, God was going to use this evil religious, politician to reveal prophetic truth.

Now Caiaphas says something that he doesn't even realize. In fact, he means something entirely different by what he says. His thinking is this - we either get rid of Jesus or Rome will get rid of us. In other words, it is better for us to kill one man than have Rome destroy us.

What he doesn't realize is that Jesus is the one and only God/Savior, who would die for the sins of the whole nation, in fact, He would die for the sins of the whole world. Jesus would die not for the sins of just Israel, but for the sins of Gentile people all over the world. The Gentile world had no Bibles, no prophets, no teachers, no hint of religious truth and Christ would die for them. The thought that other people other than Jews could be right with God was something completely foreign to the way Caiaphas would think. The Holy Spirit was uttering truth through the lips of Caiaphas when Caiaphas didn't even know what he was talking about. It was as W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "cynicism was transformed into prophecy" (p. 198).

Caiaphas is a politician whose view is, it is for the greater good of the people if we kill Jesus Christ, because if we don't Rome may destroy us. What is so ironic about all of this is that when these religious leaders killed Jesus Christ, it was ultimately that act that led God to permit Titus and the Roman army to come into Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and level it to the point that no stone would be left unturned (Luke 19:43-44).

Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot help but be impressed with the Sovereignty of God in overseeing the very words Caiaphas says. This is a secret meeting of religious leaders designed to get rid of God and God was in that meeting actually orchestrating what they were talking about and most of the time they didn't even know what they were talking about. This group of religious leaders were not calling the shots, God was. They weren't going to kill Jesus Christ because they wanted to, but because God ordained it.

The sovereignty of God extends to every arena - political, religious, social and spiritual. It is far better to live life acknowledging this great truth rather than fighting against it.

ACTION #3 – The religious leaders plan together to kill Jesus Christ. **11:53**

These leaders have just acknowledged truth - Christ's miracles, they don't know anything, one dies for all and yet their hearts were so hard that they not only rejected Jesus Christ they plan to kill Him. These are religious leaders who knew the Bible and they should have known that the entire program of God demands that Christ die as God's sacrificial Lamb. **God is so sovereign that He actually uses the evil plots of these very religious non-believers to accomplish His plan.**

The official decision of this group is that Jesus Christ must die. They had no clue that this was the predetermined plan of God (Acts 2:23). From their perspective, they believed they were in control, but it was God who was in control. Christ would die to fulfill the very prophecies Caiaphas uttered right out of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:8). No one ever beats God.

ACTION #4 – Jesus withdrew from the Jews. **11:54**

This verse is so sad. Jesus came to give Israel her kingdom and now He withdraws from Israel. He went about 15 miles north of Jerusalem to a place called Ephraim and there He remained in quiet fellowship with His disciples. These would be His last days on earth.

ACTION #5 – Many Jews went to Jerusalem at Passover time to see Jesus. **11:55-57**

Many Jews sensed these religious leaders were out to get Him, but they wondered if He would still come to the temple for the Passover feast. **Verse 57** makes it clear that the religious leaders had spread the word if any see Jesus let them know so they can seize Him to kill Him. Think of the religious hypocrisy of all of this. This is the Passover feast, one that commemorates God's gracious deliverance of Israel and at this feast their whole thought is to kill Jesus Christ.

You can be very religious and be very lost. You can join church, take the Lord's Supper, be baptized in water, tithe your money and attend all the services and still reject Jesus Christ as your Savior. That is exactly the truth of these religious leaders.

When you come to the end of John 11, you come to the end of the sign miracles of Jesus Christ. Life could have been totally different for Israel as it can for us. Christ could have blessed Israel and still be reigning there now doing wonderful things, but she rejected Him and the story is tragic. Christ can bless your life and reign in your life, but if you reject Him it will be tragic.