

# The Gospel of John

## One for All

### John 11:45-57

#### INTRODUCTION:

The entire eleventh chapter of John has dealt with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Mary and Martha had sent messengers to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, was nearing death. They requested that He come to his aid fast. But Jesus delayed for a day and by the time He arrived, Lazarus had already been dead four days. Jesus had told His disciples as well as Mary and Martha that this event was not going to end in death. It would give glory to the Father and to Himself. Jesus went before the tomb and grieved in front of dozens, if not hundreds of witnesses. Then he cried out in a loud voice "**Lazarus, come forth!**" And Lazarus came out of the tomb bound hand and foot with wrappings.

And the curtain falls.

We have no further information about that scene. Why? Because John tells us that these miracles "**have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.**" So John had accomplished his purpose of recording this miracle. **The purpose:** To confirm that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life as He claimed and that the glory of God was revealed as promised. "**So you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name**". The rest of the story had little value to that end.

Tradition says Lazarus lived another 30 years. Maybe that is true. Certainly, he lived for a while. We know very little about the life of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus after this. We know very little about the shock and awe that must have just literally roared through the mourners. We don't know anything about the conversations that Lazarus must have had after this. You can imagine the questions. "Lazarus, what did you experience when you were dead? Can you tell us where you were and what was it like?"

John then continues concerning the effect that this miracle had upon the witnesses and those who were told about it. Many believed. But It should not surprise us that some the Jews who were witnesses went to the chief priests and Pharisees and told them of what Jesus had done. As a result they were all the more determined to kill Jesus.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Have you had a time in your life when it seemed God didn't make sense? You were praying, reading your Bible, attending church, and serving. You felt pretty good about your faith. But then something happened that completely blew your mind. You might have become angry with God. You started asking, "Why, did you allow this to happen to me Lord?" I am closer to you than I have ever been in my life and you throw this on me?. Others are living the worldly "good life" and they are going Scott free. What is the deal?

In our scripture this morning we are going to see things in the text that just don't make sense. But, I have learned that when God doesn't make sense, **He is Up To Something!**

## All Stand and Read Scripture

### **John 11:45-57 (NASB)**

<sup>45</sup> Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. <sup>46</sup> But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

<sup>47</sup> Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." <sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." <sup>51</sup> Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

<sup>54</sup> 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.

<sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup> 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?" <sup>57</sup> 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.

## Prayer

It had been the desire of the religious leaders in Jerusalem and all who followed their lead to kill Jesus for a long time. They had been wanting to do that for a few years now. This miracle is the final boiling point. He is becoming too convincing! They cannot let Jesus go any further.

Unbeknownst to them, this is in perfect accord with God's plan; because God wants Him to be the sacrificial Lamb the next week on Friday at the Passover. They think they are operating on their schedule, but they are really operating on God's.

## **BODY:**

### **I. THE CONVENING OF THE COUNCIL.**

#### **John 11:47-48 (NASB)**

<sup>47</sup> Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.

The Pharisees were very powerful. They basically were the authors of Judaistic synagogue religion. They had the control over the people. They dominated the people with their laws and rules and Sabbath restrictions and restraints. The people pretty much knuckled

under the Pharisees. If you didn't do that, you got thrown out of the synagogue, and if you got thrown out of the synagogue you were as a leper. You were cut off from all social contact.

The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. During Jesus' day, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and on the Sabbath. It was ruled by the high priest, Caiaphas, who was also a member of one of the ruling Jewish sects, the Sadducees. Sadducees were often wealthy men of high position and, as they sought to appease their Roman rulers, were heavily involved in politics. They held the majority seat in the Sanhedrin.

They were facing a man they could not manipulate. A man named Jesus. He was a threat to their power. The Chief Priests and the Pharisees are the first to vocalize it.

### **John 11:48 (NASB)**

**48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."**

They're scared. And they have good reason to be. Rome could be a generous master. But it didn't take kindly to anything or anyone who could possibly threaten their authority. Roman soldiers could be ruthless when striking down anything that looked like insurrection.

And here was this Jesus. He was popular. He was powerful. And when He spoke He could mesmerize entire crowds of people. It looked as though he could raise up an army of believers that would attempt to throw off the hated chains of Roman occupation.

Now, if this had been what a mortal Jesus had had in mind – it might just work. Other men had tried it before and failed. But this Jesus had a larger following than they. He might just get it done.

BUT, **if** He didn't. The results could be unimaginable. Rome would bring the hammer down hard. People would be slaughtered by the thousands, and those who weren't killed would be carried off into slavery. Rome had leveled other cities for less. Jerusalem would be destroyed and its Temple would be burned to the ground.

**AND no Temple meant no need for Pharisees or chief Priests...and no need for a High Priest.**

## **II. THE PROPHECY OF CAIAPHAS THE HIGH PRIEST**

First, let me introduce you to the central player in this drama – a man named Caiaphas.

Joseph Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest during the time of Jesus' ministry and a few years afterwards. He was a strong opponent of Jesus and His message.

He was a successful man in his day. He ruled as high priest for 18 years. Born of the tribe of Levi, he had married the daughter of the High Priest, Annas. But because the Romans had become disenchanted with Annas, he had lost his position and Rome offered the office to the highest bidder every year. The winner this year was Caiaphas (kind of

kept it in the family). And although he was the official High Priest, Annas continued to be the power behind the throne.

They were unsure how to proceed until Caiaphas spoke:

### **John 11:49-50 (NASB)**

<sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

Now Caiaphas was not a particularly religious man. He belonged to the party of the Sadducees, and the Sadducees were a very secular group. God was not a very powerful force in their lives. For example, they openly refused to accept the idea of bodily resurrection. One of the easy ways to remember their name is that because they didn't believe in a bodily resurrection from the dead – they were very Sad U See. A perfect candidate for the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus from the dead.

So, although they may have been very religious, they didn't really believe **IN** God.

**SO**, you have a High Priest, the highest level one can achieve as a Jew, who has bought his office, and he doesn't believe **IN** God. That's **one of the first things about this text that doesn't make sense**. I mean it was true, it really happened. It just doesn't make any sense for a man who is in **the** highest position of spiritual leadership of a nation to not believe in God.

### **John 11:51-53 (NASB)**

<sup>51</sup> Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

This statement calling for Jesus' death was a cold, calculating political move. But at the same time, Caiaphas was unknowingly prophesying about God's plan for Jesus' death. Through the Sanhedrin's wicked actions, God would save both the Jewish nation and anyone else who would believe in Christ.

**Caiaphas was allowed to unknowingly give one of the most powerful prophecies regarding Jesus' mission to earth. And yet, Caiaphas was a ruthless, ungodly, and illegitimate High Priest. Why would God use him for this purpose?**

That doesn't make any sense at all. Why would God use Caiaphas to make this prophecy about Jesus?

ANSWER: Caiaphas **WAS** the High Priest. He may have bought the office, but as far as God was concerned: The office was to be respected even if the individual holding that office was not.

This is a repeated theme throughout Scripture. In fact, in Exodus 22:28 God's people are commanded: "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people." It's almost as if God is saying: you curse your rulers... you're blaspheming me. God makes no distinction between "good rulers" and "bad rulers" in this command.

God repeatedly used unrighteous acts and situations to accomplish His will. Consider the story of Joseph in Genesis. He is sold into slavery by his brothers who are so jealous of him that they wanted to kill him. They return home and convince their dad that he had been killed by a wild beast. He was falsely accused of misconduct and thrown into prison. Yet through it all God was setting him up to have the Israelites enter into Goshen, be enslaved by the Egyptians, and make an exodus from Pharaoh.

Caiaphas may have been the wrong man for the job as High Priest. He may have been High Priest for the wrong reasons. But God still honored the office.

Why allow this man who would lead the conspiracy to have Jesus murdered, the privilege of prophesying about God's plan for that very death?

Because God knows the beginning and the end and He will use good and bad events to accomplish His will.

### **III. THE SEARCH FOR JESUS.**

#### **John 11:54 (NASB)**

<sup>54</sup> 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.

Knowing of Caiaphas' plans, Jesus leaves town for a few days. He will return just a few days later...but only in His time and on His terms.

He leaves with His disciples to a city near the wilderness named Ephraim. It is probably Ephron, which is a town mentioned in 2 Chronicles 13, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. Then He came back to the house of Simon in Bethany and rejoins Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

#### **John 11:55 (NASB)**

<sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.

The Levitical law laid out in the book of Leviticus, laid out in 2 Chronicles 30 requires all kinds of ceremonial purifications before you can do Passover. So they all come pouring in to do this prior to the actual Passover itself.

The night of the first Passover was the night of the tenth plague of Egypt. On that fateful night, God told the Israelites to sacrifice a spotless lamb and mark their doorposts and lintels with its blood. Then when the Lord passed through the nation, He would "pass over" the households that showed the blood. The blood of the lamb **literally** saved the Israelites from death, as it kept the destroyer from entering their homes. The Israelites were saved from the plague, and their firstborn children stayed alive.

The Israelites who applied the blood of the lamb to their homes become a model for us. It was not the Israelites' ancestry or good standing that saved them; it was only the blood of the lamb that made them exempt from death.

God always does His will according to His timing. **Isn't it interesting that He chose the Passover Feast to be the occasion for Christ's death on the cross?**

That is because Jesus is our Passover. By spiritually applying His blood to our lives by faith, we trust Christ to save us from death.

Along with the instruction to apply the Passover lamb's blood to their doorposts and lintels, God instituted a commemorative meal: fire-roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. The Last Supper was a Passover meal. We just remembered that meal when we served communion a few moments ago to remember His death on the cross.

### **John 11:56-57 (NASB)**

<sup>56</sup> 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?" <sup>57</sup> 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.

This was a curious and fickle crowd. They were fascinated with Jesus. They wanted to know if He was going to show up and see what would happen next. He certainly does show and we will discover in the continuing chapters what happens next.

### **CONCLUSION:**

There are only two options when it comes to Christ. You either believe Him or you reject Him. The Sanhedrin were worried that if they did not kill Jesus, He might fail to lead a successful insurrection that might cause the temple and the nation to be destroyed by the Romans. No temple meant no need for Pharisees, chief Priests, or a High Priest. **This is worldly wisdom.** Isn't it interesting that it was **when** they crucified Jesus, that their fears actually took place. When Jesus died, the veil was torn from top to bottom to indicate that Jesus is now our high priest. We now have direct access to God through Jesus. So Caiaphas technically lost his position as high priest when Jesus died. The temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. Thus no place for sacrifices. No place for the Pharisees and Sadducees to exert their self-acclaimed power.

It may not make sense why God would allow Caiaphas to be the one to make such a profound prophecy. But unknowingly, Caiaphas, prophesied correctly. "Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."

Caiaphas was instrumental in causing this prophecy to come true. Jesus died on the cross so that **everyone** (Jew or Gentile) who believes may be saved. One **perfect** sacrifice for all men. When you believe, and all the evidence supports that you believe, you are given the right to become a child of God. Your sins are forgiven. You are redeemed.

Even this does not make sense. Why would God redeem a sinner like me? This is the grace of God. He loves us! When God doesn't make sense, remain faithful by using the strength and health that He has blessed you with and glorify Him in all that you do and say because **He is Up To Something in your life!**

Jesus is the ONE FOR ALL. DO YOU BELIEVE?

**This is the Day.**