

### **I Am the Resurrection and the Life, Part 3**

Scripture: John 11:45–57

Code: 43-60

For now, we open our Bibles to John 11. The whole chapter is about one event, and that is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was a member of a little family. We only know three members of the family; Lazarus and his two sisters. We don't know anything else. We don't know a lot about them except that they were a host family to Jesus and that He had come to know them very well to the degree that He not only loved them with a spiritual and divine love, but He loved them with a personal affection because the Greek verb, *phile* is used to describe His affections for that family, and in particular, for Lazarus.

So He had gotten to know them. They were a group of believers who believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. They believed He was the one who had come down from heaven. Martha gives testimony to that in the chapter verses 25 and following. So this is a family that He had come to know and for whom He not only had divine love, the love that He has for His children, but for whom He had personal affection. That drew out of Him, a very painful experience when He came to the tomb and stepped into the situation of all these people who had come around to mourn and weep and wail over the loss of this family. Mary and Martha were weeping and sorrowful over the loss of their dear brother.

Jesus stepped into that situation, and it wasn't just them weeping; it was a huge crowd, chapter 11 tells us, of mourners there. There would always be professional wailers, people who did that very well and sort of ignited the wailing. Then there would be the legitimate weepers and wailers and mourners who were sorrowful. They apparently came from many, many places. In verse 19 it says, "Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother."

This particular initial sadness lasted seven days in the Jewish tradition, and then they would kind of go back to their own homes, but sort of commit themselves to being available for comfort and consolation for a period of at least 30 days. This is a community event that is going on, and Jesus steps into it. Lazarus has been in the ground four days, and by 72 hours complete decomposition has set in, as I laid out for you in our last discussion about it.

Jesus arrives, and He comes to the tomb. He is sorrowful. He is sad. There are verbs here that describe a kind of sorrow that's really almost abnormal. It isn't just that He's weeping because He lost a friend. It isn't just that He's weeping because He sees the pain of these two ladies over the loss of their brother. He's not weeping because the community feels bad about it. It is a kind of agony. It is a kind of wrenching experience for Jesus that comes because He collects all the data that is visible in this event.

He not only loses a friend in this; He not only sees that sorrow, but He's able to process immediately the sorrow of every death in every human relationship in every human family. He can project His omniscience to grasp all of human sorrow and suffering in the face of death. Not only that, He's surrounded by unbelief, a whole nation of unbelievers and even by the tomb and in the home there, a

group of unbelievers. So He's literally engulfed in unbelief. He also grasps the reality of death and eternal punishment and eternal judgment.

So this is an agonizing moment for Jesus, matched only by His agony in the garden where He comes into a face to face confrontation with sin, which He Himself will bear. This takes His horror to another level, but here I think is the greatest agony in the life of Jesus up to this point as He faces the deadly reality and the eternal consequence of death and how far-reaching it is. In the agony, He comes to the tomb and in verse 43 He says, "'Lazarus, come forth.' The man who died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him and let him go.'" And the curtain falls. We don't know anything more about that scene. We have no further information.

Tradition says he lived another 30 years. Maybe that's true. Certainly, he lived for a while. This was not a temporary resurrection in that sense, in a human sense. We don't know anything about the reunion of Mary and Martha. We don't know anything about the shock and awe that must have just literally roared through the mourners. We don't know anything about that. We don't know anything about the conversations that Lazarus had after this. You can imagine the questions. "Lazarus, where were you? Can you tell us where you were and what was it like?" Maybe, maybe he had the same response that the apostle Paul had when he had his trip to heaven in 2 Corinthians 12. He was caught up into the third heaven, you remember, but he said, "I saw things too wonderful to speak of, and it's not profitable to speak of them anyway."

Paul had been to heaven, and nobody could get out of him what that was like. We have no information. Why not? Because this isn't about the psychology of reunion. This isn't about the rest of Lazarus's life. This isn't about our curiosity of heaven. What is this about? Verse 4 says, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

All we're interested in is the glory of the Son, and when He said, "Lazarus, come out," and in a moment Lazarus was standing there, that's the point of the story. The rest is irrelevant. In fact, in verse 40, Jesus says to Martha, "Didn't I say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" and they did. The purpose of this was to bring glory to God, and glory to God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when the curtain fell last Sunday for us at the end of verse 44 and the scene ends. So we pick it up in verse 45. This is an important final section, final scene in this incredible drama. But before we look at it, I'm going to tell you, this is the aftermath. This is the effect. Here come the responses, and they are predictable. They are predictable because we've seen them all through the gospel of John and we see them all through the other gospels.

But before we look at that, I want to remind you about a statement made by Peter. Peter was preaching in Jerusalem in the temple, in the temple courtyard with the masses of Jewish people there. It was his second sermon after the ascension of Christ, after the Day of Pentecost, after the birth of the church, the second great apostolic sermon. He indicts the Jews with an astonishing accusation, paradoxical, ironic. He says to them, "You killed the Author of life. You killed the Author of life," Acts 3:15. Some translations say the Prince of life. That's the old traditional one, but it's the word *archgon* and that means, "the author." That means, "The founder." That means, "The source."

How ironic. You killed the life giver. We learned that from John 1, "In Him was life." John 1, "Nothing was made without Him because He made everything that was made." He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life." He doesn't give life. He is life. You killed the Author of life. More ironically, Peter said, "And you desired a killer to be released to you. You killed the Author of life, and you gave life to a killer." How bizarre. That's the nature of unbelief, and the crime has no parallel really. It is without equal in its heinousness.

It had been the desire of the religious leaders in Israel and all who followed their lead to kill Jesus for a long time. They'd been wanting to do that for years, a couple of years. It now reaches a point where they cannot let Him live any longer. This miracle is the final boiling point. They can't let it go any further, and so this raising of Lazarus, perhaps the week before the Passover, that close, triggers their desire to kill Him now and not wait, which 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 don't know that, of course, but they're not operating on their schedule. They're operating on God's. They had tried to kill Him many times before that unsuccessfully, but now after this miracle, which is the seventh great miracle that John chronicles in his gospel, after this, they can't wait any longer.

In fact, it's all sort of summed up as you note down into verse 47 when they call a counsel and they say, "What are we doing? We've got to act. We cannot let this man –" verse 48, "– go on like this." Completely oblivious to the fact that He raised a dead man on top of everything else. Now remember, it is a radical claim for someone to say He is God and is to be summarily rejected no matter who says it with one exception – that's Jesus.

He said He was God, and then He demonstrated the truth of that claim. Now, you have two choices. You can believe or not believe. When He said He was God, He was either telling the truth or lying. You can look at the evidence and there's plenty of it in the four gospels and the testimony of the rest of the New Testament and the testimony of the Old Testament leading up to it, and the testimony of the living church ever since. There's plenty of evidence that what He claimed is true, and there is no indication that what He said is false. You can look at the evidence, but you only have two options. You believe or you don't believe. There's no third possibility. There's no safe middle ground.

Luke 11:23 Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is –" what? "– against Me." And all the evidence demands belief, belief; all the evidence of Scripture. Still, no matter what He did, no matter what He said, no matter how the evidence made the case clear, unmistakable, undeniable, they hated Him, the leaders did. It was an aggressive kind of unbelief. It was a hostile kind of unbelief. It was a violent kind of unbelief. They tried to stone Him to death in Nazareth after one sermon in His own hometown.

They accused Him over and over again of being demon-possessed, of being under the power of Satan. They said He was a violator of the Law of God and a violator of their religious law and tradition. They said He was a blasphemer. They said He was a drunkard. They said He was a friend of sinners, the low-life crowd who were outcasts. They said His teaching was unacceptable, His authority was self-invented. Everything that they viewed Him as being led them to the need to kill Him. That's the hostile unbelief.

There's another kind of unbelief. There were a lot of people who followed Him because of His miracles and they were curious and they were fascinated, and they were interested, and they even were healed and fed, but it was superficial. They're like the ones in John 6, who when He started

speaking very clearly and very demanding, it says that, “Many of His disciples walked no more with Him.” There was that kind of unbelief that isn’t hostile. It isn’t violent. It isn’t angry. It isn’t murderous. It’s just indifferent. It was that kind of attitude to which our Lord spoke in Matthew 11:20-24 when He said, “You’re in some serious trouble, you folks around Galilee because if what had been done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and the cities around Galilee had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented. You’ve seen enough to have a very high level of accountability to God. You are in serious trouble.”

It’s not a safe place to be curious. It’s not a safe place to be a nominal believer in Jesus, to feel sentimental about Him. That’s a very dangerous place. You might as well be hostile. But there are those who were hostile, and those who were just curious or indifferent.

Thirdly, there were those always who believed, who believed. They were the few who found the narrow way. They were the ones Jesus called, “the little flock.” They were the 12 minus Judas, who left everything to follow Him. They were those like Martha, Mary, and Lazarus who confessed that He was the Son of God, the Messiah, the one who came down from heaven.

There were those who repented like Zacchaeus, like the Samaritans in the village of Sychar, like the royal official and his household in John chapter 4. They were like the blind man in John 9 who believed, and then many in chapter 10, across the Jordan where Jesus went with His disciples and proclaimed His messiahship and many believed. There were others.

There definitely was a little flock of believers. So these were the responses that we’ve seen in the gospel of John and they’re in Matthew, Mark, and Luke as well. There is belief and unbelief, and two kinds of unbelief. I guess maybe unbelief on a spectrum all the way from being extremely hostile to being only marginally curious, but it’s still unbelief. As we come to verse 45 then, we leave the scene behind us. The curtain falls, as I said, and we now meet these three groups. We meet the believers. We meet the violent haters, and then we meet the indifferent people.

So we have here at the end of this chapter, a microcosm of what you see through the whole ministry of Jesus and actually what you see even today. There are people, of course, now and you’re among them who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, there are people who are violently hostile to Him, violently aggressively hateful toward Him. Then there is that massive people who have some sort of marginal, sentimental attitude; equally damning.

Let’s meet group one, verse 45. “Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He had done, believed in Him.” Here is the “many.” Let’s just call them the “many.” They believed in Him. Who are these “many”? Back to verse 19, which I read earlier. “Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.” Now, I told you this is a fairly substantial family. They live in a town called Bethany two miles east near the Mount of Olives, around the side of the Mount of Olives. Folks from Jerusalem can easily come. They are sort of on a highway from Jericho to the city, which is traversed a lot, so they’re easy access. People knew them. They knew who they were.

You’ve got not only villagers in Bethany, but you’ve got people coming out of Jerusalem to visit with them. The indication is they were a relatively substantial family. They show up later and show that they have some means. I don’t know what the number is. Maybe it’s dozens. Maybe it’s multiple of

20. Maybe it's 100 or more. I don't know what the "many" is, but many mourners came, and they have been there now four days already, filling up the first seven days when everybody would be there. Now the resurrection has happened, and the mourners are still there. They have known the family. They have known Lazarus. They know he was dead. They know he's been in the grave four days. They know what that means because Jews don't embalm. They get it.

He comes out of the grave. The miracle is so clear, unmistakable, undeniable. Their hearts open to the reality that this is truly who Martha said it is. He is the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who came down from heaven, God incarnate. They also believe the way she believed. We have to assume that theirs is a genuine belief because that's what's indicated in verse 26. "Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha says, "Yes, I believe," and here we find in verse 45, "Many of the Jews believed."

We assume that the verb in the same context has the same significance and the same meaning. They believed. They believed, and rightly they should believe. What would you believe if you saw that? Clearly, they believed. They had seen the glory of God. They had seen the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, if you will, to borrow Paul's language. They're convinced. Now, not all believing is legitimate, but genuine belief is mentioned in chapter 1, verse 12, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even those who believed in His name."

They believed and they were given the right to become children of God. Their sins were forgiven. They were redeemed. They became the children of God. They ceased being the children of the devil. They are the believing many, many in a relative sense. Many of the number that were there; not many of the nation. Many of the number that were there. They believed.

There is a kind of believing that doesn't save. If you go back to chapter 2 of John, you will remember this. In John 2:23, He was in Jerusalem at the Passover. This is the beginning of His ministry, and many believed in His name. Many believed in His name, "Observing His signs, His miracles He was doing. But Jesus on His part was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men and because He didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."

He knew that the kind of believing that was in them was not sufficient to save them. It wasn't sufficient to make a genuine connection, and it's illustrated in the next two verses. "One of those who believed was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night," and he tells Him what they believed. "Rabbi, we know you've come from God as a Teacher, for no one could do the signs unless God is with Him." They believed He was a Teacher. That's true. That's not sufficient. That's true. That's not enough. He didn't say, "You're the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who came down from heaven," like Martha did.

So there's a kind of faith that is superficial. It's not enough. It's not sufficient. We see it again in chapter 6. Disciples following Him, listening to Him, who turn and go the other way and walk no more with Him, a superficial, temporary kind of belief, like the seed sown in the rocky soil and the weedy soil. It never produces fruit and it dies. In chapter 8, you see this same kind of thing again. This may be more characteristic of the superficial indifferent group that we'll see in a minute than anything.

John 8:30, "Many came to believe in Him." Many. Well, what kind of faith is it? What does it mean to believe? Jesus said to them, the Jews who believed Him, "If you continue in My Word, then you're truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." You're not free from sin. You're not free from judgment. You're not free from everlasting punishment yet, but if you continue down this path, you will come to the knowledge of the truth that saves. So there is a kind of faith that can be only initial, only a kind of beginning faith that isn't sufficient to save.

But in the case we have here, I think we have to interpret the believing here in the context of the believing that our Lord spoke of and saw illustrated in Martha early in the chapter. There is here a wonderful thing going on. Now, mark this. We're maybe the week before the death of Christ, and there's a flurry of things happening to the souls of people. Before Jesus came, a week before that, He had been beyond the Jordan and many were believing in Him there. That's what we saw at the end of chapter 10.

So in the last weeks of His life, as He preaches the gospel and puts on display His sovereign power, many are believing. Here, there's actually a great encouragement of conversion and regeneration at the funeral of Lazarus. That's group one. Throughout all of the history of the gospel and the proclamation of Scripture and the reading of Scripture, there will be those who believe. The Lord has His people everywhere in the world. He'll draw them out of every tongue and tribe and people and nation.

Group two is the murderers. Group one is the "many." Group two is the murderers. They take up the bulk of the rest of this section, verse 46. The Pharisees were very powerful. They basically were the architects of Judaistic synagogue religion. They had the power over the populous. 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 a pariah. You were cut off from all social contact. You might as well be a leper.

So everybody sort of took whatever abuse the Pharisees laid out in order to stay in the system. Some of those people, some of those Pharisaical sycophants are there mourning at this event. When they see what's going on, they decide to report to the Pharisees. So, verse 46, "Some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done." What did they tell them? He raised the dead. It's what He did. He went to the tomb. Gave them the story, He raised this guy who had been dead. He was really dead. We know he was dead. He raised him from the dead. They gave the report.

They are concerned more about the Pharisees than they are about their own souls. This is what false religion does. False religion allows you to give up your own soul to please somebody who is the destroyer of your soul. That's what false religion does. So they report. They saw the miracle. They described the miracle. With a sinister intention, they tell the Pharisees. Knowing how much the Pharisees hate Jesus already, and knowing that this is going to enrage them even further, but they're complicit with the Pharisees because they've sold their souls to the devil.

This is the hardness of the human heart in the face of literally overwhelming evidence. Evidence means nothing. Evidence means nothing. Why do they hate Jesus so much? Jesus said that in John 7, "The world hates Me because I testify to it that its deeds are evil." They hated Him because He told them they were evil, not evil in their sin, but evil in their religion. Sure, evil in their sin.

Sinners can usually take that. If you tell them they're evil in their sin, they can handle it, but you tell them they're evil in their righteousness, and they'll hate you for it.

You see the depths of unbelief, the profound fortress of anti-God ideology and ideas in religion. God had put His glory on display through His Son. They didn't see it. So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, verse 47. They called together either a sort of a quorum of the Sanhedrin or the Sanhedrin itself, which was the religious tribunal, the ultimate supreme court of Israel. They called together a meeting of the chief priests. They would be the Sadducees and the Pharisees. This is made up of the religious elite, people with money and power and influence convening a council, and this is where they say, "What are we doing? We have to stop talking. Why – " as they say in verse 48 " - are we letting this man go on like this? We've got to stop Him."

Do they fear the political implications? Not in reality. They just hate what He says. They just hate what He says. "What are we doing? We have to stop talking. We have to act." So, as John Calvin puts it, they come up with a plausible disguise. They create a theoretical, imaginary disaster because they want Jesus dead. They don't believe this, but they invent it. This is it: "For this man is performing many signs." Now, there you have it folks. The testimony of the people who hated Jesus, that what He was doing was miraculous.

Why are there liberals living now who deny the miracles when the enemies of Jesus who were there don't even deny them? Nobody denied them. He's performing many miraculous feats. "If we let Him go on like this – " here's their thing " - all men will believe in Him." That is political hyperbole. That sounds like a politician to me. Everybody will believe, and the Romans will come and take away both our place, and our nation will lose our position, will lose our power, will lose our nation. Talk about a doomsday scenario. This is the end of everything. We can't allow this to go on. We've got to stop. We've got to act or we're going to lose it all. This is an idea concocted as a pretense to kill Jesus for His teaching, which tore at the fabric of their system.

By the way, this is the same exact thing they say to Pilot later. "Well, if you don't crucify Jesus, you're no friend of –" who? " - Caesar," because Jesus is going to lead a revolution, and it's not going to make Caesar happy. The apostles went to Thessalonica in Acts 17, and Paul and Silas are preaching in the synagogues, and Jews are believing and believing. But some of the Jews didn't believe, and they're furious about what's going on. This happened in the synagogue with the Jews in Thessalonica. They're furious, so they start to go after the Christians. They go to the house of Jason, and they drag him out of the house, and they're starting this persecution, and how do they defend this bizarre behavior? They defend it with these words: "They all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there's another king." They stirred up the crowd.

The Jews doing the same thing long after this in the book of Acts saying the Christians are going to start a revolution and the Romans are going to come, and there's going to be a huge conflict, and we're going to lose our freedom. They knew Jesus wasn't a revolutionary. What did Jesus say? "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's. Give to God what is God's." Jesus never picked up a sword. Jesus never started a revolution. Jesus wasn't anti-Roman. Jesus didn't try to free the slaves. Jesus didn't try to balance economics. Jesus didn't get caught up in social justice. Jesus didn't start an army. He didn't call people to defend Him. He was meek. He was gentle. He was compassionate. He didn't go around killing people. He went around making dead people live.

They knew. They knew, but this was a ploy. We've got to create a massive potential scenario here

so that we can justify killing Jesus, or else everybody is going to believe in Him, which again is another testimony to the validity of His miracles. His worse enemies, the very people who really crucified Him using the hands of the Romans, believed in His miracles. They had no other choice.

So, Caiaphas steps up. Caiaphas, despicable guy, who was the son-in-law of Annas. Annas had previously been the high priest. Caiaphas is in that office because Rome allowed him to be there. He knows that. Rome has the power to depose any high priest. Now, if you go to the Old Testament, you can go back into instruction in the Old Testament Mosaic Law about the high priest. It was an office for life essentially. There are comments made in the Old Testament about what happens, certain things happened when a high priest died. It signaled a significant event. So the office of high priest in its primal sense was to be for life. It didn't always work out that way, but that was the ideal.

Contrast that with the fact that Josephus tell us from the time of Herod the Great, just around the time we move from B.C. to A.D., Herod the Great comes in. Between Herod the Great and 70 A.D. when Jerusalem is destroyed, less than 100 years, there are 28 high priests, 28 high priests. This is a revolving door. This is a power position. This is a political position. People are vying and buying and selling this position. You even have references in the New Testament to Annas and Caiaphas both being high priest at the same time.

It was supposed to be much more strict than that. Caiaphas, as I said, was Annas's son-in-law. It sort of stayed in the family at this particular point. But Caiaphas, this guy who was there because he's not a threat to Rome, knows his position is only his as long as he pleases Rome, uses that as a ploy. By the way, I think it's interesting that it mentions a little later – I'll comment more on that – but in verse 51, being high priest "that year." It's just something about that "that year" that grabbed because "that year" was the final year of any legitimate high priest or any illegitimate high priest. Why? Because it was a week later or so that the veil was shredded and the priestly system was null and void. He is the last of, I guess you could say, somewhat official high priest.

Now, this shows up as we follow the history that the office sort of declined and continued to drift and be bought and sold. By the time you get to the 23rd chapter of Acts, the apostle Paul is called before the Sanhedrin. It was many years later and he is confronted in this council. It's worth reading this. "Paul looked at the council – " Acts 23, " – and said, 'Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God to this day.' The high priest Ananias commanded those standing by to smack him on the mouth." Wow, whack him on the mouth. For what? For saying, "I've lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God until this day."

So this guy whacks Paul in the mouth. Paul responds. "God's going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!" You know, honestly, there's something about that I like. I just have to confess that. "God smite you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the law and in violation of the law order me to be struck?' But the bystanders said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?' Paul says, 'I wasn't even aware he was the high priest.'" Now that will tell you what the high priesthood had descended to. He didn't even know who it was. He didn't even know who the high priest was. There shouldn't even have been a high priest. So whatever this thing was, it was high priest with lower case "h" and a lower case "p" and high only in the mind of whoever bought the office.

So that kind of corruption starts with Herod, who appoints three or four of the early ones, and then the Romans appoint the rest. One of them Caiaphas says, "You know nothing at all." That's



autocratic speech at its best. You're all ignorant. Aren't you glad I'm here? "You know nothing at all." I've got the answer to everything. "Nor do you take into account that it is expedient." He's talking to the Sanhedrin, the elite. "It is expedient – " not just, not righteous, not correct, not right, but expedient, beneficial " - for you that one man die for the people and that the whole nation not perish."

"Don't you get it?" he says. It's beneficial. Under the guise of being a noble politician, under the guise of Jewish nationalism and patriotism, this unscrupulous man is trying to get rid of the biggest obstacle to his own power, popularity, and theology, and that is this Jesus Christ. He wants him dead, and he says, "Don't you get it? If we don't kill Him, we all die." Again, more political nonsense and hyperbole. Either one man, Jesus, perishes or the whole nation perishes.

So, the conclusion of the council is follow the wishes of the high priest. Follow the wishes of the high priest. That's going to be the plan. We've got to kill Jesus to save the nation or we're going to have a revolution, and the Romans are going to come. We're going to lose our power. We're going to lose our nation. They're going to massacre us.

So, look at the words again. Verse 50, "It is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Jesus must die to save the nation. Jesus must die to save the nation. If we kill Jesus, we save the nation. How strangely true is that statement? But not in the way that he thought. The words of Caiaphas have a deep resonating reality of truth that he never even understood. But notice the next verse, verse 51, "Now, he didn't say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation 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."

Do you know what this man did, this autocratic, self-exalting, dictatorial, brutal, sly, corrupt man? He gave a clear statement on the substitutionary atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He talks about substitutionary atonement. He has no idea what he's saying. Not surprising. God used the mouth of Cyrus to give a prophecy. God used the mouth of a false prophet Balaam. God used the mouth of Balaam's jackass to speak for Him. There are no limits to what God can do. He had no idea what he was talking about. He meant one thing, but God meant something different.

"There are many devices," says Proverbs, "in a man's heart, nevertheless, the council of the Lord shall stand." Or Joseph's word in Genesis 50, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." This is a divine irony. By the way, nothing in Scripture says that the high priest had any prophetic gift. Nowhere, no. This isn't an actual prophecy that he gave. This is not that at all. This is not a power that belongs to the high priest. He said what he said. It just so happened that God ordered every word and gave it a completely different meaning, but every word was correct. This is a backdoor into understanding verbal inspiration, verbal inspiration.

An illustration, by the way, of how Scripture is given. When the Bible writers write, they write their own words, but God controls their own words just as in this bizarre sort of almost anti-illustration. He says his own words, but God orders every word. So Caiaphas's ignorant words, God declares the true impact of the death of Christ. He will die to save the nation, but not physically, not physically. Why? In 70 A.D., they're all going to perish in the Roman holocaust. But spiritually, He will die for the salvation of that nation, and not that nation only, "But that He might gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad in every nation." He died for the sins of His children all over the globe.

Caiaphas's ignorant, hateful, vengeful, trumped up words are absolutely true. This gives us a foretaste of what it's going to be like when we go through the rest of the Passion Week, how every single detail no matter who is doing what for what reason fits into God's purpose. He's just a link in the chain begun by divine decrees until God fulfills His purpose.

So, verse 53. "From that day forward, that day on, they planned to kill Him." Apparently, unanimous vote. We have to kill Him, save the nation. Caiaphas's speech worked. They decided to kill Him from then on. Didn't take them long. Really didn't. They were amped up to put it mildly, and at the end of the next week, they were able to accomplish it in the purpose of God.

There's a final group to add to these murderers. The end of the meeting, what's the final minutes? What do they write? Death to the life-giver. Death to the life-giver. What a climax. "Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews." He becomes an outlaw, has to escape at least for a few days until He comes back in the next week. Went away from there to the country near the wilderness into a city called Ephraim. It's probably Ephron, which is a town mentioned in 2 Chronicles 13, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. So He got about 12 miles walk away, and He went there with His disciples for the days between that day, the raising of Lazarus and the day He came back to the house of Simon and met back with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and came into the city.

That brings us to 55, which is the final group, the multitudes. They were stirred by Him, but indifferent. Verse 55, "Now the Passover of the Jews was near. 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 cleanings before you can do Passover. So they all come pouring in to do this prior to the actual Passover itself. So they're pouring into the city.

They're gathering in 56 as they were seeking for Jesus. Why? Because He was the focal point of the previous two Passovers. He as the focal point of the previous Passovers? Where is He? He was the topic of conversation through the whole nation. They were saying to each other as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?" They know how the leaders feel. They are very clear about that. They know He's hated. Of course, verse 57, "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," arrest Him.

What can I say about the crowd? Curious? Sure. They knew about Jesus? Yeah. Fascinated with Jesus? Right. Where is He? They want to see Him. They want to see His miracles. Do you think He'll show? He did show. What happened when He came? What happened? Chapter 12 tells us what happened. They shouted at Him in verse 13, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." Wow, triumphal entry Monday. By Friday, what were they crying? "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" We're going to live through all of that.

Those are the only options really when it comes to Christ. You believe and all the evidence supports that you believe or you reject. You reject with hostility and animosity and anger; or you reject with superficiality and indifference. But there's only heaven and there's only hell. Whether you reject

Jesus with hatred or reject Him with sentimental good feelings, you end up in the same hell. “You will die in your sins,” Jesus said, “And where I go, you will never come because you believe not on Me.” Either you believing savingly on Christ or you will perish. The question is the same question that Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe?” That’s the question.

Father, we thank you for the time that we’ve been able to look at this really amazing chapter, and again end up where we always end up in the gospel accounts, facing the decision of all decisions, the choice of all choices; to believe or not believe. I pray, Lord, that you will produce faith. We know that faith is a gift of God. It comes from heaven. Lord, would you be gracious and grant life and belief to those who are dead in trespasses and sin? May the realities of the claims of Christ and the evidence come to life so vividly and with such compulsion, and may the reality of heaven and all its joys and hells and all its horrors become real as well.

May you open minds and hearts to go from either animosity toward Christ or indifference toward Christ to full faith in Him as the only Savior, the only hope of heaven.

Thank you for the power of your Word. We are told in the Scripture that the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit convinces us of the truth of Scripture, that the Holy Spirit testifies that we are yours. And He testifies not above the Scripture, beside the Scripture, but through the Scripture. We thank you again that the Holy Spirit testifies to the veracity of Scripture through the Scripture itself, through its self-evident truthfulness. Again, we have seen that today. Take your truth and pour it into us, and then out from us and use us for your glory. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

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