

John 11: The Resurrection & Life

Rejecting Life, Choosing Death

John 11.45-57

*“Today I have given you the choice between life and death,
between blessings and curses.*

Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make.

*Oh, that you would choose life,
so that you and your descendants might live!”*

DEUTERONOMY 30.19

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

*I have come that they may have life,
and that they may have it more abundantly.*

JOHN 10.10

A Polarizing Event

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

- ❖ “Many Jews” had come to visit and console Mary. This is a reminder to us that God knows what He is doing whether or not we can discern His plan.
- ❖ The timing of Jesus was perfect—as it always is with the will of God. Had Jesus come when the sisters sent their message, these Jews would not have been there to see for themselves, and the work of Jesus would have been just another healing and not the supreme revelation of His deity which led them to put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God (cf. 20.31).
- ❖ The ultimate purpose of “beholding” the glory, grace, and truth of Jesus the One and Only (P¹⁴) is to bring people to faith and eternal life. The failure to effect belief, and thus life, means death.

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

The Terrible Power of Unbelief

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

- ❖ Notice that they no longer question the authenticity of His works as they have in the past: *And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons”* (Mark 3.22). Matthew Henry wrote—

“They are . . . witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledge his credentials and yet deny his commission.”

- ❖ In taking this position against Jesus, they were fulfilling the messianic prophecy of Psalm 2.1-2:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together

against the Lord and against his Anointed . . .

- ❖ Secondly, notice the basis of their “concern”—Jesus and His gospel was a threat to their lifestyle; like many today, they felt like they *owned* the ministry—it served them, giving them status and legitimacy. In reality though, the legitimacy of the ministry of Jesus was a threat to their own facade of legitimate spiritual leadership—a leadership that relied on manipulation and intimidation.

A Pragmatic Solution

Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”

- ❖ Caiaphas’ pragmatic solution: *“it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”* Reasonableness or practicalities cannot replace faith. The pragmatic rationale of Caiaphas ultimately ensured the destruction of Jerusalem, not its deliverance.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

LUKE 19.41-44

- ❖ At the trial of Jesus whom Pilate declared to be innocent, this very same Council would choose the release of a murderer and demand the death of Jesus, saying, “Let his blood be on us and our children.” Forty years later, their words would be fulfilled as their children and grandchildren were slaughtered in the streets of Jerusalem by Roman soldiers.

❖ *“That one man die for the people” —*

- ▶ Ultimately, this was the purpose for which Jesus came: to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10.45). For those who believed in Him, it meant eternal life. This day, however, when the ultimate credibility of Jesus was presented to Caiaphas, he chose death.
- ▶ This is the heart of the gospel: a vicarious, atoning sacrifice (Lamb of God) to take away the sins of the world (substitutionary death).

❖ The full revelation of Christ’s deity had been manifested in the resurrection of Lazarus; that deity provides the only sufficient provision for atonement (cf. Hebrews 1.3; 10.12-14)—

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

COLOSSIANS 1.19-20

Not the Idea of Caiaphas

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

- ❖ Caiaphas spoke prophetically, not out of a heart yielded to the Holy Spirit, but out of an unregenerate heart that was overruled by an arbitrary act of God—*He causes even the wicked to serve His purposes.* Caiaphas was unwittingly used by God to set in motion the redeeming plan of God: “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” was John’s proclamation—undoubtedly made in the presence of some who sat in this council meeting.

“This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

Acts 2.23

- ❖ This serves as a somber warning to us: the office or the gifts do not legitimize one’s ministry, no matter how right their words. It is only in true surrender (John 15.4-5) and God-love (cf. 1 Corinthians 13.1-3) that our ministry is acceptable.

❖ *“That Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.”* This was the ultimate plan of God as the Apostle Paul explained to the church at Ephesus—

“. . . you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

EPHESIANS 2.12-16

The Question That Must Be Answered

Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the festival at all?” But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

- ❖ The interested but undecided crowds: “What do you think?” One cannot ignore the facts of Jesus and insure the status quo of life and future—

I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

JOHN 8.24

- ❖ The rejecting council: one may reject Christ’s claims and oppose His gospel, but ultimately, they will suffer the fate described in Psalm 2: *broken with a rod of iron and dashed to pieces like pottery.*
- ❖ Martha’s response is the one that reveals a heart of true belief and regeneration: *“I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*