

John 11:45-53

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. 53 So from that day on they planned to put him to death (NRSV).

The death and resurrection Lazarus is proof of the possibility of resurrection from death, proof of the divine status of Jesus, and witnessed by a large crowd. There is no denying the event or the divine nature of Jesus. God's time has come and everything is happening on God's time schedule. In the raising of Lazarus it is God's glory that is revealed. The power over life is so great that the word of Jesus is all that is needed for the power of the Lord to be revealed.

The scripture takes place immediately after Jesus raises Lazarus. Word spreads throughout the village and into Jerusalem but there is a division among the people. This event brings different reaction from the people which is primarily dependent upon their attitudes and social status. Some have faith in Jesus and some reject him. The miracle itself would have led many to believe. But some people were informants of the religious leaders and went to the Pharisees and reported what happened. This stirred up the opposition of the religious leaders. The raising of Lazarus resulted in the condemnation of Jesus. Their response was due to their hardened hearts which prevented them from being able to see who Jesus truly is as the sovereignty of God fulfills a divine plan. The chief priests and Pharisees call a meeting of the Sanhedrin to discuss what to do about Jesus. They didn't summon Jesus so that they could talk with him and work things out. They were not interested in collaboration or working together to reform the church. They wanted use their power to stop him. That is the nature of the problem. They should have been agents of solidarity and work together for God's glory. They think in terms of pure selfishness and assume that if they ignore Jesus then his popularity will grow and people will embrace him and they will rise up and provoke the Romans to attack.

As the plot thickens, God's glory is on Jesus alone. Caiaphas was the high priest at the time. He is the highest ranking priest, the most powerful religious leader, and head of the Sanhedrin. He speaks up and informs the ruling council that it is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed, His perspective is one of political perseverance – Jesus has to die to save the people from the Romans. In reality Jesus had to die to save the people from themselves. He had to die but not just for Israel. He prophesied Jesus has to die for the nation, He saw Jesus as a political threat. But his words have a deeper meaning. The death of Jesus will unite God's people but is for the whole world, to save all the people. He knew. The high priest knew. He was in on it. It wasn't just the religious leaders. It was their leader that spearheaded the conspiracy

against Jesus and he knew better. At least he could have met with Jesus and tried to understand him. He should have known better. He knew Jesus would gather into one the dispersed children of God and still the high priest plotted to kill Jesus. As they planned to put Jesus to death, Caiaphas spoke words of divine truth. Jesus would indeed die for the nation and for all people.

There are a few things going on with Caiaphas. There is the political threat of the Jewish nation being under Roman rule. There is the belief that as Jesus gained a significant following it could incite rebellion against Roman authority. If Jesus is perceived as a king this could lead to Roman intervention. He determines that the death of Jesus would allow them to avoid conflict with Rome. His religious concerns are that the claim to be the Son of God is a threat to their established religious order. It is the high priest that represents Jewish faith and tradition. Jesus is a perceived threat to their religious order and right now the high priest has control over religion. Though he knew that the death of Jesus would bring unity to God's people, he did not fully understand the significance. He did not care enough to try to grasp God's plan. He saw the immediate problems being caused by Jesus but not the divine purpose. He did not know the transformative nature of Jesus. He was thinking that if they eliminate him it will silence his movement. He failed to realize that the death of Jesus is not the end but a new beginning with a new covenant to bring salvation to all the people. Caiaphas protected the status quo to preserve religious orthodoxy. He did not understand the implications of his actions. God's plans unfold in ways human beings do not fully understand or control.

There is a lesson here on the extent of human resistance to God's plan. The enemies of Jesus work against God to secure their own power from a perceived threat to their status and stability. They played a role in God's redemptive mission. This moment presents itself as a turning point for the religious leaders in their organized plot to kill Jesus. From the upper echelon, their resistance to the truth is an outright rejection of God. The resistance is due to their distance from God. Rejecting Jesus does not change the fact that he is the Messiah. God's plan cannot be stopped. You can resist Jesus and oppose Jesus but you cannot stop him. This death was not a tragic accident, it was planned by God. The choice before us is to either believe and follow or resist and oppose. Surrender to God's will. Trust in the sovereign work of Jesus. Everyone that encounters Jesus must decide to believe, or turn away. When people are more concerned about their own status and power, they find themselves in opposition to God.