

## **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

Scripture: John 11:45-57

Code: 1534

### Reactions to the Resurrection of Lazarus

Turn in your Bibles to John chapter 11. Now chapter 11 deals with the resurrection of Lazarus, as you know. We've been dealing with it for several weeks now. But as we come to our subject for this morning, which is verse 45 to 57, we come to the effects of the resurrection of Lazarus. What were the results? What did it cause in the area in which it happened? And we'll see all of these effects. And as we look at them we're going to see that same kind of response that we've seen all through John's gospel, that same kind of reaction that is so predictable.

Do you remember that in the very beginning of the gospel, John said about Jesus these words, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"? Now, that became the pattern for the book, the constant rejection of Christ on the part of most people, on the part of all Israel with few exceptions. After ministering and doing miracles for about three years, the end of it all is the faith of a very, very few and the hatred of the rest. And exactly what John said came to pass. Jesus Christ who was the God-man, the lover of all men, the gentle healer, the bread of life, the living water, the resurrection and the life, the good tender shepherd was finally rejected. He was hated. He was despised and ultimately, as we shall see in a few weeks, He was nailed to a cross. But before that universal humiliation reached its climax on the cross, before the shame of the cross was allowed to take place, God who is always jealous for the Son's glory, designed that Christ should do one great dynamic climactic miracle in the face of all the rejection. And that miracle was the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. An astounding dynamic unbelievable expression of power that reversed the death process and made that man four-days dead alive.

Now, that miracle was what I call a miracle of defiance because it was done specifically in the face of rejection of Israel with the purpose of causing them to see that even if they rejected Him He was still who He claimed to be and still able to express that kind of power. It's defiant on the part of God as if to say you believe what you want, you conclude what you want, it doesn't really matter, I'll prove it again, Jesus is God and He has almighty power.

And so, it was a miracle, first of all, as we have seen then, to give glory to God and the Son. It was a miracle to elevate them in the face of rejection. As a secondary purpose, it brought faith to the hearts of the disciples, didn't it? Jesus had said earlier and I think it's verse ... oh, let's see ... 15 that He was glad about the opportunity for the miracle in order that the faith of the disciples might be built up. So it

was a secondary thing not only to manifest His glory defiantly in the face of rejection, but also to reveal to the disciples who He was and strengthen their faith which could easily wane in the face of rejection. And as a third purpose, sublimated to the other two, it had a dynamic effect on unbelievers and made believers out of them, as we shall see.

Now, as we look at the effects of this miracle, we're going to see the division of all of these people who take different views of this miracle. And it becomes a very, very interesting division because it presents to us a formula for reaction for all times, even today. Men today react to Jesus Christ categorically in the same way that these people do to the resurrection of Lazarus by Christ. A couple of details before we look at that.

Now, Jesus returns back to Jerusalem, Judea, particularly Bethany just a few miles out of Jerusalem because He knows Lazarus is dead. He has been beyond Jordan because they're after Him, they want to kill Him. He's been out there to protect Himself from being killed. He knows His time isn't ready yet. So, finally, He moves toward Jerusalem and He knows He's taking His life in His hands. Then He performs a miracle that is so public and so dynamic that it can't be overlooked. It's got to become the topic of conversation. I mean, you know, how many days does your neighbor come and say, "Hey, you know, Lazarus, he died four days ago?" "Yeah." "He's alive. I saw him the other day, doing real well." That will rattle your cage.

So, It's a very outstanding miracle and it's a miracle that, you know ... you know it's going to go like wild fire. Everybody is going to know ... public miracle. And He knew that there would be those who would believe on Him because of it, but He also knew that it would just throw incendiary spark to the fire that was already burning in the hearts of the Pharisees and the ones who hated Him. So, He knows what He's doing.

It's kind of interesting and paradoxical that nobody ever denies the miracle. Not even the ones who were the murderers, not even the haters of Christ, they don't deny the miracle. How you going to deny that kind of a miracle, right? How you going to deny it? You can't say it didn't happen. Everybody knows the guy was dead, you can't deny it. So you know what they do? They just say, 'Don't confuse us with the facts; we know He's not the Son of God. It doesn't matter if He raised the dead, don't tell me those things. That only confuses my unbelief.'

So, even though, you know, to deny the miracle would be ridiculous, right? They don't deny the miracle. They deny the Christ which is more ridiculous. And so, as we approach this, we don't even have a discussion of the miracle. It's not even in here. Nobody even brings it up. The key to the whole understanding of the reactions is in verse 40, I want you look at that. We'll bounce off that verse and see some other things. If you don't have a Bible, there's one in the pew rack maybe near you, you can use.

All right, verse 40. Now here's the key thought. "Jesus saith unto her," Jesus talking to Martha, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Now you remember that I told you last time that that statement is the statement of principle. In other words, He's saying this, "If you want to see the most out of this miracle and see it in its true value, you've got to come to the miracle in the right frame of mind." Right? If you come to the miracle believing that it's going to manifest God's glory, then when it happens you're going to say, "Oh look, there's God's glory." If you come to the miracle preoccupied with a corpse, all you're going to see is a living corpse and you won't really reflect on the glory of God. If you come to the miracle blinded, totally unbelieving hardened heart, you're going to walk away, "And so I don't know what happened but obviously it didn't happen like it looked."

In other words, whatever attitude you bring to this event is going to color the decision that you make about what happened. And that's true about anybody. That's true of anything we experience. And what He's saying there in verse 40 is, "If you have the right attitude and an open heart of believing, then when you see the miracle you're going to come to the right conclusion."

In John 7:17, that classic verse, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." God reveals truth to those who are open to it, right? If your mind is closed, you haven't got a chance. And that's what you have here. You have some whose minds are open, some whose minds are closed, some whose minds are just rattling around. And we'll see what happens in every case. The open heart responds by believing, see. And they experience love and truth. The closed mind just walks away and says, I hate Him...I hate Him ... I hate Him worse than I ever hated Him." See, because there's no way to frame that event in the mind of unbelief.

Now, I want you to see specifically the effects on four groups. If you have a bulletin there's an outline in it, you can take some notes along the way if you're so desiring. That effects on four groups and this is just a way to outline the thing so you'll be able to kind of catalog it in your brain. First, the many...then the murderers, then the multitudes, then the Mary and Martha and Disciples, how it affected all of these.

The many believed on Him. The murderers had new fresh bitterness and more vigor to kill Him than ever. The multitudes just sort of stood around and watched Him. They were sort of spectators. And then Mary, Martha and Disciples had stronger faith. Their faith was built up. They were like the Christian who sees God do something wonderful and his faith is strengthened.

All right, so we have four groups and you'll see that there's division again. You have two of those groups on the believing side and two of those groups on the unbelieving side. It's always what Christ does. Every time Christ steps in a situation, He's divisive ... always. I mean, if you step in a situation and say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is true and this is false," then everybody who agrees with that is

true and everybody agrees that that is false, that's that simple. Christ said, "I am the Son of God. I came to bring the message of salvation. I came here to reveal Myself and God to you. I am the one." If you believe, you're on that side. If you don't believe, you're on that side. Christ is divisive at that point. And Christ came to bring a sword to divide so that it might be clear cut as to man's attitude toward God.

All right, so division is again the theme as it is repeatedly in John and we'll see two sides ... which just polarizing automatically.

First of all, notice the many in verse 45. "Then many of the Jews who came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did believed on Him." Now, when Lazarus died, he was a pretty prominent guy and his sisters were well-known, Martha and Mary. And so a lot of the Jews, and by the word Jew, John refers primarily to the leadership in Israel, the highbrow religious leadership, although it may have reference also to people, but primarily to the leadership, when they ... when Lazarus died, all these people came from Jerusalem to his funeral ... all these prominent Jews, leadership type Jews. They were there. They came to mourn the death of Lazarus.

You'll notice in verse 45 it says, "They came to Mary." And it doesn't mention Martha. It might be an interesting reason to that. The reason is that because evidently Mary was the really sorrowful one. She was the really disconsolate one. You go back into verse 31 and you see the Jews and they're in there comforting Mary, not Martha. Martha's hustling around, she's hostess, you know. She always picked the role of hostess--got to get the stuff fixed and you know, get everybody settled and all of this and that. And at this point in verse 31, she's already run out to see Jesus and they're still there comforting Mary. Mary was the pensive one, the pessimistic, the kind of...the disconsolate one and so they were comforting her.

Then verse 32 talks more about it. In verse 33 when the group arrives to Jesus, Jesus sees Mary weeping and the Jews weeping with her. So evidently they had kind of comforted Mary. She needed more comfort than Martha did ... her faith being weaker, evidently, in terms of Lazarus.

Now all of them had witnessed an astounding miracle, just devastating. And as a result of it, they had believed on Christ. That's what it says, "Many had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." Now the whole key to everything, friends, is in the last few words of that verse. What are they? "On Him." Now faith in order to be meaningful must be placed on the right object, right? That's what it has to be. Not just believing in believing. There's a whole theological school now that's developing and their thesis is "faith in faith." Isn't that good? They have faith in faith. They believe in believing. And you'll say to people well, you know, this and that ... and they'll say, "Oh, I believe ... I believe." What do you believe? "Oh, I believe ... I'm a believer." A believer in what? "Well, I just believe. I believe in the ... in that God is in control ... I believe." Oh, that's real good.

You know something? Faith in nothing is nothing. It's zero, zilch, nothing. It doesn't mean anything to believe in believing. You know, I like it ... you've heard the song, "I believe for every drop of rain that falls a flower grows." Oh, in the first place, that's a lie. "I believe that somewhere in the darkest night a candle glows." Tremendous. "Every time I hear a newborn baby cry, or touch a leaf or see the sky, then I know why I believe." You believe what? Don't push me. "I believe." Well, goody-goody. You see, that's the kind of attitude that a lot of people have ... I believe. You believe what? Usually when somebody comes to you and you ask them a question they say, "Well, I believe that's it's over there." That means they don't know. If you can't believe in something and on something, you're believing is ridiculous. Who cares whether you believe a candle glows? Who cares whether you believe a flower grows? That's irrelevant. God's not going to say to you someday, "Well, enter into My Kingdom because you believed the candle glowed." No, no ... that's so ludicrous it's inane.

No, no, no that's not the point. The point is at the end of verse 45 "they believed ... what? ... on Him." You see, faith is nothing unless it's placed in Jesus Christ. That's the whole point. Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other, there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If a man does not put his faith in Jesus Christ his faith is meaningless. And what cuts the ice is faith in Him. John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on ... what? ... His name." Christ is definitive. There aren't options. You can't just believe any ole thing you want, that's ridiculous.

You know, it's amazing how people can affirm that God is propositional and static and God is a God of order and absolute precision in everything He does in His natural world and that the moral world is a free for all. You know, we fly to the moon and we fool around with all the sciences and we do it on the basis that scientific truth is static and it never changes. I mean, the guy in the laboratory who is pouring all the stuff in the thing, he is operating on the basis of the fact that it's not going to violate known truth. If it does, he'll blow the building to bits. The people who blast off into space, they count on the absolute Immutability and accuracy of scientific natural law. Now if God is a God of law and God is a God of order, He's not going to move over to the moral area and say, "Oh, just ... you know ... do whatever ... do your own thing." That's absurd.

A student at Valley State said to me after I spoke, he said, "I don't buy what you said." That's okay, it wasn't for sale. It was for nothing ... you know. He said, "I think that morality is only a matter of symbols and you give any meaning you want to the symbols." And this is a popular philosophy. And, you know, it's so ridiculous. What a philosophy. In other words, my ... what's meaningful to me is to, you know, shoot my wife and come over and stab your wife and cut up your little children and burn your house down ... that's what gives meaning to my symbols. Well, that's idiotic. You have a society where everybody does what they want and look what you get. God has propositional static revelation in terms of morality just as He does in the scientific world. And when you come to believe in something, you better believe in the accuracy of the statement of the Word of God that if you don't

believe in Jesus Christ you're sentenced to hell forever.

You say, "Well, that's awful narrow." Yeah, well it's also true. If you'd like I'll make a big broad statement that's a lie. Now genuine faith is placed in an object, Christ is that object.

Now, another little thought about verse 45. Having said all of that, let me say this. The term "believed on Him" does not necessarily always mean genuine saving faith. It can. It doesn't have to. I can say I believe on Him and that expresses my true faith, doesn't it? Somebody else can come along and say, "Well, I believe on Him" and that may not be the same kind of believing that I'm believing. I mean, the devils believe and tremble, right? I mean, in John chapter 2 a lot of people saw His miracle and said, "Oh, we believe, we believe." And Jesus did not commit Himself unto them because He knew the character of their belief was not legitimate.

So, there's a sense in which it can be an honest genuine heart knowledge and there's another sense in which it can just be mental assent, right? Well, you have that, I think, clearly in chapter 8 where Christ shows the difference. In verse 30, "As He spoke these words many believed on Him." There's the same phrase. The many believed on Him. Same identical phrase you find in chapter 11, we just read it. Many believed on Him. "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, if you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples."

In other words, your initial assent to believing does not necessarily mean you've totally committed your life, see. Ah, I'm sure there are, you know, millions of people who would not deny that Jesus is the Son of God. But they don't know Him. So, the phrase "believed on Him" may mean genuine salvation, it may mean only mental assent. Now the question we want to know is what does it mean in chapter 11 verse 45? I believe it means genuine salvation. I believe it means that for several reasons. First of all, I believe it means that because of what it says in verse 52 that the purpose of this whole miracle which led to the death of Christ was that He would gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Prior to that He had talked about His saving the nation. I believe the whole point of His death obviously was salvation and I believe that part and parcel of the miracle of Lazarus was to bring about salvation in the hearts and lives of some of God's chosen children. Also, the fact of verse 48 where the Jews say, "If we don't get rid of this guy, everybody's going to believe on Him." Evidently they were convinced of the genuineness of the faith of these people.

Also, back in verse 4, the same chapter, Jesus made the statement that the sickness of Lazarus was for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified. And evidently when these people believed, that gave Him greatest glory. So, I believe from those verses that this is genuine faith.

Secondly, I believe it's genuine faith because I think it's in contrast to the rest of the reaction in the chapter which is the reaction of unbelief. And I think you have a division. Whenever Christ presented Himself, there was a division. And if the rest of the chapter deals with unbelief then this part would

deal with honest belief to show that dichotomy. And I'm also inclined to believe that it's genuine faith because of the convincing nature of the miracle itself. If a man's heart was open to any kind of believing and that miracle happened, it must have been convincing. So, many believed.

Now may I hasten to say that the many is only many of the ones at the funeral, not many of Israel. They were just a handful of people, but many of the ones who were there. That takes care of the many who believed. Now remember, believing is not believing in nothing, It's believing in Christ. What do you mean believing in Christ? Believing that He's the Son of God, right? That He's God in human flesh, that He came into the world and died on a cross, that He rose again the third day, that He ascended to the Father, that He can come into your life, forgive your sins and cleanse your life. That's believing in Christ and nothing short of that.

All right, the second group we meet are the murderers. And we meet them beginning in verse 46 and they think that the whole incident of Lazarus is nothing but a catalyst to hurry up the execution of Jesus. And here's the contrast. Verse 46, "But some of them went their way to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done."

Now, these are the stool pigeons in the group. They came to the miracle in unbelief. They went away in unbelief. They didn't even bother to find out what the deal was and how you explain it. They ran to the Pharisees and, of course, they knew how much the Pharisees hated Jesus already. They ran to the Pharisees, "Boy, you guys are in trouble. He's done one now." And told them what He had done.

Now, some people, some commentators have given to these a pure motive. And they say they went in all honesty to try to testify to the Pharisees. I don't think that's the case. The reason I don't think it's the case is because there's no ... nothing's ever said of these people after verse 46 and had they been believers they would have likely been quizzed like the blind beggar was in chapter 9. Also, the fact that this is part of the section which talks about all of the hatred and animosity and murder leads me to believe that these guys were the opposite of the believing ones. This is the division again. The many believed, but some went and told the Pharisees. And they reported that Jesus had done this and boy, if you guys think you're in trouble now, you better check again because Jesus really did one now and the people are going to come after Him. They're going to follow Him when they hear about that miracle. So, I believe they came with at least a sinister intention...to tell the Pharisees knowing how much the Pharisees hated Jesus anyway, to show them their bitterness and to activate the Pharisees in some way against Jesus. And it worked ... it worked.

But isn't that predictably the result of the hard heart, the callous soul? You can show them all the truth of God there is and they don't respond to it. They just can't ... there ... there is no capacity in unbelief for perceiving truth. Did you get that? There is no capacity in unbelief for perceiving truth. Did you ever just talk to somebody and you got something you want to convince them of and they will not believe it and as long as they won't believe it you can't communicate it? They don't see it because

they won't see it. Just that simple.

So, they went to that grave with blockheads, solid rock, unbelieving, unmoved and that's just exactly how they walked away. And you want to know something wonderful about unbelief? it doesn't even bother to rationalize ... doesn't need to, it doesn't believe. It doesn't have to go in and say, "Well, let's see. I know how that whole thing happened. Let's see...he did this and this and this..." It doesn't...these guys are so steeped in unbelief they don't even bother to rationalize. They just walk off and don't even worry about the miracle. And so this is the reaction of a hard heart. And this is the depths of unbelief. I mean, anybody that could stand by a grave and watch a guy walk out of there who had been four-days dead and have grave clothes hanging all over him and see a bunch of people unwrap him and he walks off living and not believe ... friends, that's unbelief. And that shows you the depth of unbelief and that also shows you why no man comes unto Me except the Father draw him. Nobody comes to Christ until God reaches in that heart and melts that unbelief, you know that? That's why before you ever witness, you pray that God will till the soil so you can ... so the seed can get some roots, right? God ... that's why we pray. Before I ever preach, God, prepare hearts to receive truth, because the unbelieving hard heart has no ground that can be fertilized. God has to till the soil by the Holy Spirit so that you're ready and prepared to receive the truth.

So, instead of recognizing the glory of the Son of God in the miracle, they just say, "Oh boy, we're in trouble, here's a threat to the status quo." And so they call a council meeting, verse 47, and a couple of strange bedfellows get together. "Then gathered the chief priests," who were made up of ex-high priests and all their families and ex-priests, mostly Sadducees which was a politically oriented sect who didn't believe in resurrection or angels, and they were theological liberals who had gotten themselves involved in politics, does that sound like about par for the course?

And on the other hand you had the super-duper legalists who were the Pharisees. You know, they were the ones who just ... who were so legalistic that it was ridiculous, just, you know, I told you many times, the greatest illustration of their kind of legalism was that some of them were called the "bruised and bleeding" Pharisees because they always wore ... they always closed their eyes when they saw women and they kept running into buildings. And so they got the name "bruised and bleeding Pharisees." Well, that's the idea, that's the kind of legalism they were under. And, I mean, what was it to look at a woman in those days? I mean, they were covered with, you know, drapes. But anyway, it was all ... it was pure legalism.

So, you have these two groups who are really ... you know, one is the fighting fundamentalists, see, the super fundamentalists and the others are the political oriented liberals. And these two strange bedfellows get together to provide a council to see what to do. They can agree on one thing--get rid of Jesus. So, they come together and they ask a very profound question. This is how every committee meeting begins: "What do we ..." see, "What do we do ... now that we've gotten organized, for this man doeth many miracles." Do you notice there's no denial there? There's no denial of the miracles,



they don't deny them. "This man doeth many miracles."

You can imagine somebody raising their hands and saying, "Well how about if we believe in Him? It seems logical. We've got to do something, friends, cause this man does many miracles. We better kill Him." Now isn't that really astute? So, instead of recognizing Him, they decide to kill Him because He's a threat to the status quo. In their little committee meeting, they get together and they're going to talk about what to do. Verse 48, "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him." Everybody's going after Him. We're going to be in real trouble.

Now you get to the nitty-gritty, here's where they really hurt, the middle of verse 48, "And the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation," see. Now you get down to it. They are protecting self. They figure it this way. Well, let's see, if Jesus gets a big following and the people push Him into being a political Messiah, Rome's going to come down and squash the rebellion and guess what happens to us? They'll take away our place.

What does that mean? Well, that talks about the temple and their seats of authority. They'll remove us and our nation.

You know what the Romans did to anybody that gave them problems, insurrection? Scattered them. They'd scatter the Jews everywhere so they couldn't have any unanimity, they couldn't get together to do anything. They'd ship them off to one country and a bunch to another country and scatter them all over the world and mix them all into ... they tried to do this with many of the countries they conquered. And this little council decides, 'Boy, we're in trouble ... because if they follow Jesus and a rebellion starts, Rome's going to come down and squash the whole thing and then we're going to lose our whole thing. We're going to be out.'

So, they were protecting self. They were such hypocrites and Jesus hit them right in the middle of their hypocrisy. He called them just what they are, whited sepulchers, outside all painted white and inside you stink, you're full of dead men's bones, you know, and all these things He said about them. And He constantly irritated them. Oh, He irritated them. They were just driven to distraction. And I imagine it's legitimate because absolute perfection does tend to irritate wickedness. And so, now they were afraid that the people might bring about an insurrection and they'd really get into trouble and lose everything.

Now, isn't it interesting that they don't even bother to talk about Lazarus? They don't even bring it up. They don't even want to explain it ... pure unbelief doesn't even bother with rationalization. They were masters at ignoring the miracles. They were so good at it they didn't see any of them. Besides, every time they tried to look into a miracle, they got baffled and humiliated. Back in chapter 9 they said to the blind beggar, the blind beggar came and he was seeing, you know, all his life he had been blind, born blind, all of a sudden he can see. Everybody knows him. The Pharisees meet him and say,

'What's going on?' He says, "Well, this guy put spit on my eyes and I can see." And they said, "Well, we don't know that guy," which immediately disqualifies Him from doing anything. "We don't know that guy, who is He? Where did He come from?" And the blind man says, "Hum, here's a marvelous thing that you don't know where He came from and He opened my eyes," as if to say, "Boy, that's really ... that's really something. You don't know where He came from and He opened my eyes? Take a guess. He came from God."

But see, they never did ... they were investigating a miracle in unbelief. If you want to read how unbelief investigates a miracle, read chapter 9, it's terrific. Unbelief starts out with a presupposition and comes to the same conclusion they started with by disregarding all the facts. So they were afraid they were going to ... they didn't even bother with Lazarus, they were afraid they were going to lose their seats of authority and everything else. Unbelief is, you know, unbelief investigating a miracle is like the bug who has lived all his life under a rock and he comes out into the light and immediately races back under the rock, see. They love the darkness. Can't take the light.

So, they were afraid of Rome. Rome was essentially tolerant but Rome had been known to scatter certain people who had been in insurrection and so they were a little afraid of this. And they also were afraid of the fact that the resurrection of Lazarus could cause some public excitement, I'm sure it did, I'm positive, and really stir up the people. And the people anyway were stirred up about Jesus. He had been at the last two Passovers and really caused a stir, tremendous stir. He was ... He was kind of the main attraction at Passover time. The first time He came He cleansed the temple. And He was a dominant person. And they knew that the person would be just ready for somebody to throw a spark in the ... among the straw and whish, they'd have a fire on their hands if the people really got excited about Jesus. You want to know something? They were right. You know they were right. In chapter 12 verse 13, when Jesus finally got to Jerusalem, they all started crying, "Hosanna," and throwing palms at His feet, right? Boy, they ... Behold the King, behold the King. I mean, it was a phony deal because by the end of the week they were nailing Him to the cross. But the Jews were right they had something to fear because the people were really enamored with Jesus Christ.

And so, they decide the best thing to do is get rid of Him. Now it's an interesting thing but they're like very many people today. They always judge things, now watch this, they always judge things not by what is right or wrong, but how it affects them. Did you get that? In other words, you go to every situation and you don't judge it--is it right or is it wrong--you say, "Well, how will it affect my income? Or how will it affect my status? Or how will it affect my physical happiness? Or how will it relieve my pressure?" See. And you know, very honestly, folks, we all do this. We don't go ... you say, "Well, gee ..." Some guy said to me, "You can't be a lawyer and be honest." Somebody else said to me, "Well, you can't be an ??? and be honest." Don't tell me that. If you can't then pack up your duds and get out of it. But I believe you can.

But we get into this world and we are being saturated with, you know, "Fletcher-situation ethics," so we think that whatever the situation offers to me, that's what I want to take out of it. so we judge everything on the basis of how it affects us not on whether it's right or wrong. And they were the same way. They didn't judge in the light of principle. They didn't judge in the light of divine propositional truth. They didn't judge in the light of right or wrong. They judged on the basis of what is it going to do for me? That's philosophical hedonism. That's saying that whatever accomplishes my highest good, that's what I'll do, whatever I think my good is. It's the philosophy of "do your own thing." That's what it is exactly ... which is as old as Satan is. That's what he told Eve, friends, do your own thing. No, we think we're really with it, aren't we?

And so, the standard of everything is the situation. That's situation ethics. That's the philosophy of relativism. Do your own thing. And it's the standard of today. And it is the opposite of divine absolutism. There is a right. There is a wrong. You do the right, you prosper, God blesses. You do the wrong, you lose. That's how it is.

You say, "Well, I did a lot of wrongs and I haven't lost yet." The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness but is ... what? ... long suffering. The reason you haven't lost yet is because God is lovingly patient. But don't be like those people in that same chapter who said "Where is the promise of His coming, He hasn't come yet, He never will." Don't count on it. Judgment may not come today, but it will come.

And so, they are operating on situation ethics. They want whatever they want at their own comfort. And you remember what they did, read the parable in Matthew 21 sometime, read it this afternoon. Where they ... Israel is like a vineyard and God sends servants to the vineyard and they kill them all. And finally he says, "Well, I'll send my son, certainly they wouldn't kill my son." And they killed the son that they might steal the inheritance, see. They were out for their own good, that's all they wanted. These leaders, they wanted nothing but what they could gain. And they had no ability to judge at all.

Well, the committee's not getting anywhere. But they've got a guy who is a real strong leader, his name is Caiaphas and he blurts out his thoughts in verse 49. "One of them named Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all." You know, that's...that's just a put down. You know, to quote Charlie Brown, "You blockheads." That's what he's saying. He's just saying, "You are all ignorant. Don't you know anything?" And if you knew ... if you read the Bible and just read the passages on Caiaphas, he was really, he was the crummiest kind of person, egotistical, sly, rude, an opportunist, a manipulator, a godless phony bent on getting what he wanted by hook or by crook. And Annas who was the previous high priest some time back who kind of worked with him and really Caiaphas was a puppet for Annas, he was the same way.

And so he blurts out, he doesn't care about shedding innocent blood, that doesn't matter to him a bit. He's the biggest hypocrite that ever was. He says, "You guys know nothing," verse 50, "haven't you considered that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people that the whole nation perish not?" In other words, Caiaphas says, "Look, if we don't get rid of Jesus, Jesus leads a rebellion, Rome squashes it and we all die. So, men, it's either Jesus dies or the nation perishes. Don't you know that?"

Now, this hypocrite, he's doing this under the guise of patriotism, right? He's going to be a patriotic hero. *He's a phony. He hates Jesus.* Jesus presents to him a threat to his popularity, that's why he wants rid of Jesus. There's no ... where's the threat of a revolution? The Romans didn't squash them when they were throwing the palms at His feet. There's no revolution. He ... he draws two things, two extremes right out of his own head ... to hypothetical situations under the guise of patriotism. He's a phony. If you want to read about how phony he is you ought to read Matthew 26. In Matthew 26 he brings Christ into trial and he says, "Who are You?" Keeps saying, badgering Him, "Are You the Christ the Son of God?" Jesus finally says, "Yes." And then He goes on to say, "And one of these days you're going to see Me coming in power and all of this."

And you know, that's exactly what Caiaphas wanted Him to say cause he wanted to have something against Him to kill Him with. He wanted Him to make a statement that was blasphemous in their minds so they could have justify ... justification to kill Him. Then you know what the hypocrite did? When Jesus said that, He said, "Oh, blasphemy," he started tearing his clothes, you know, renting his clothes. You know why people rented their clothes? They did it in sorrow. They did it when the holiness of God had been blasphemed. He was renting his clothes, "Oh. Heblasphemed." And inside he's going, "Ha-ha-ha." See, real excited about it. He was so happy Jesus blasphemed; now he could kill Him. But on the outside he's a fake. So here he fakes patriotism because he personally wants to get rid of Jesus. And he says, "Either Jesus dies or the whole nation goes."

Oh, that is so ... that is the oldest gimmick in the book. Every salesman that ever lived used that. Every individual who ever lived used it. Every businessman, every teacher, everybody uses it, every kid uses it. They present the two extreme alternatives as if there is no other one, right? And then force you into deciding. We all do that. We all do that. *He says, "Well, either Christ dies or we all die."* Who says we all die? You said that. Nobody in Rome said we're all going to die.

But they don't think that. He's got them. He's got them on two extremes and they've got to take one or the other now. And nobody raises their hand and says anything about anything else. There's no other alternatives at this level. Either this end or this end. And since he's the High Priest and a pretty powerful guy, they say, "Okay, Jesus dies. Got to save the nation." Even though the nation's not in any danger. The sad part of it was they killed Jesus and the nation died, too. They killed Jesus, it wasn't too many years later, Rome came down and smashed the nation into oblivion, a million hundred thousand Jews were killed ... Titus Vespasian. Caiaphas wasn't really right, was he? Killed

Jesus, didn't save a nation. Killed Jesus, destroyed the nation. Just the opposite.

Now there's an interesting thought here and I want you to see this. Verse 51, "And this spoke he not of himself, but being High Priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." Now what is that? What's this prophecy?

Well just look ... look at verse 50 again, it's unbelievable. He was saying either we kill Jesus or the nation dies, but the words that he said came out as a prophecy of Christ's death. See it, listen to it. "Nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not." Isn't that a tremendous prophecy of Christ's death? He died for the nation, didn't He, that the people might not perish. Out of that vile degenerate mouth came the truth of God. You see, what he was doing was uttering blasphemy and God parodied it into truth. God put a prophecy through the mouth of Caiaphas. God twisted his words of blasphemy into words of prophecy. Why Caiaphas was actually speaking the truth and in his brain he hasn't got the faintest idea of what he was saying. Oh, I like that. I'm glad God can take that kind of stuff and turn it to His glory, aren't you? The Bible says He makes the wrath of men to do ... what? ... praise Him. Psalm 2 says, "He who sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, He shall hold them in derision." They thought by killing Jesus they'd save the nation. Well, they killed Jesus and they lost the nation, too. And the words of Caiaphas had a prophetic ring. Here he was, that blasphemous mouth, prophesying the death of Christ, announcing Christ's death.

Oh, God can use anything. God used Caiaphas unwittingly without his brain. Why that elevates Caiaphas to the ... to the stature of Balaam's ass. And Balaam would be a good illustration of Caiaphas, too, because you remember Balaam made an unwilling prophecy, too. But here Caiaphas makes a prophecy and doesn't even know it. That's how God can use a mouth to speak His truth.

Proverbs 21 ... no, Proverbs 19 verse 21 says, "There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord shall stand." That's good. That's good.

And you'll notice that it says in verse 51, "He spoke not of himself but being High Priest that year." Now always in the history of Israel the High Priest was God's spokesman, right? And God still let the High Priest be His spokesman, even though the High Priest's mouth had to be rearranged to make it so. In fact, the Holy Spirit actually condemned Caiaphas by his own degenerate mouth, by making him speak the very truth of God at the moment he was speaking his own evil. Isn't it interesting how God parodies the evils of Satan?

Now there's a good example of divine inspiration. You want to know how God wrote the Word of God? He arranged the words that He wanted His prophets to write. Did you know that? Did you know that every single solitary word in this book in its original autograph was inspired by God without error? Not the thoughts in here alone, but every word was written by God. Just like He arranged the words in

Caiaphas's mouth, He arranged the words in the minds of the prophets and writers who wrote this book. You want to know one of the most interesting passages in the Bible? First Peter 2:10 to 12, you know what it says? It says the prophets after they had written down their books, sat down to study them to see what they said. They thought this was great stuff. They wanted to find out what it meant. God spoke the words using their minds and their personalities. That's inspiration.

So, in Caiaphas's own words, God declares the effect of Christ's death. Now that's how God works. He uses human instrumentation, even the hatred of men. Isn't the cross the living illustration of that? The cross was the worst that hating men could do and yet it accomplished the greatest blessing, didn't it? You know, there's a passage that comes to my mind in Acts 4:26 that illustrates this, I'll just read it to you, listen to it. This is tremendous. Acts 4:26, "The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ." You know, men are gathered against Christ, all right? "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the nations and the people of Israel were gathered together." What were they gathered together for? Listen to the next verse, "To do whatever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before." Now isn't that interesting? All these haters got together, Israel and the nations of the world.

You say, "Whocrucified Christ? Who's responsible for Christ?" Israel crucified Christ. The nations of the world crucified Christ. The Romans crucified Christ. Any unbeliever crucifies Him afresh and puts Him to an open shame. And even a Christian, according to 1 Corinthians 11, can also be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, In a sense, when he partakes of communion unworthily. So, you see, the guilt is the world's. But did you notice that after saying that, he said they did what You determined what would be done? Isn't that interesting? God took the wrath of men and let it be used to accomplish their salvation. And Caiaphas is just a link operating in the divine decree. So, he fulfilled the counsel of God without even knowing it.

Now, verse 52 adds this thought, that Jesus should die for the nation, verse 51, right? That nation being Israel, "And not for that nation only but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Now who does that refer to? Gentiles. Jesus not only died for Israel, but He died for the other children of God scattered all over the world that He might take both those groups and make them one, and that was the great mystery of the church, wasn't it? Jew and Gentile, Ephesians says, the middle wall broken down, they became one body. We're all one in Christ, aren't we? There's neither Jew nor Greek, Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female, we're all one in Christ. That's our positional oneness. For experiential oneness, Christ prayed in John chapter 17. But positionally, we were brought together; Christ made a union of Jew and Gentile. One body, and that's what the church is, we're all people who love Jesus. This isn't a religion, friends, this is a love relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other. This isn't a religion, religion is a curse. This is a relationship we have with Christ and with each other.

Then they come to their great conclusion, verse 53, "Then from that day forth, they took counsel together to put Him to death." Every one of the meetings that this little group had from then on became a meeting for Messianic murder. That was it from now on. How do get Jesus. What a climax, the incorrigible wickedness of these Jews, and the wickedness of those Romans and all those who participated in the death of Christ. People have said, "Well, we shouldn't blame the Jews for crucifying Christ." My friend, it doesn't mean you don't love Israel to say that they crucified Christ. You read 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 15 and it says right there the Jews killed Jesus. That's the very words they use.

But it also says, as we just read it, in Acts that everybody else did, too. And I can't say of some Jew back there who yelled, "Crucify Him" is any more guilty of the death of Jesus Christ than I am before I come to Him as my Savior. For when I don't want Him as my Savior and Lord, I stand with the crowd that said crucify Him, get rid of Him. We are not saying we do not love Israel when we say that the Jews crucified Christ, on the contrary. We love Israel. I love myself, that's healthy, you know that? And I know that I'm as guilty sometimes in reflecting back before I came to Christ, totally as guilty as anybody who was there when He died.

And so, they came to the conclusion death to the life giver and the Jews began to plot His death, the leaders. The people aren't in on the plot; they didn't get in on it till the very end, crying "Crucify Him."

Verse 54, "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went from there unto a country near to the wilderness into a city called Ephraim and there continued with His disciples." The end of the public ministry of Jesus, that's it. The end, finish, it's all over. He's through. He goes away because it's not His time to die and He escapes for His life. The plot continues. He's driven out for the last time. Now, there's two reactions to Jesus. Some believed, many believed, others were murderers.

Now, what about the mainstream of the people? What about the multitudes of Israel who weren't in on the plot, who were God-fearing Jews, who really weren't in on the crucifixion of Christ? Where...where do they fit? Verse 55 and we'll see it just very quickly, "And the Jews' Passover," this deals with the multitudes who just watched, they were excited and stirred up and they just watched, "And the Jews' Passover was near at hand and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves."

Now, Passover feasts, some of the Old Testament law said if there were certain sins you had to come a month early and clean yourself, get ready for the Passover. They were moving in toward Jerusalem. "Well, immediately they sought for Jesus," because He was the popular, He was the attraction. Boy, the word was out. "And they spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, What think ye that He will not come to the feast?" In other words, He had been to the last two and, boy, it was exciting

when He was around. Will He come, do you think He'll come knowing the hatred that's simmering and knowing that the counsel is after Him, do you think He'll show?

You see, this is the attitude of so many people. To them, to multitudes today, Jesus is a spectator sport--you just watch, see. Why in churches, liberal churches, they're crammed with Jesus watchers, just looking at Him and saying, "Oh, isn't it interesting?" No commitment, no genuine faith, no salvation, no deep love, no desire to serve, just want to watch, get into religion and watch.

Well, the multitude who watched became the multitude who cried crucify Him because the Bible says you are either for Me or you are against Me. Oh, so many people want to watch, just watch. Verse 57, "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment that if any man knew where He were, he should show it that they might take Him." If anybody finds out where Jesus is, boy, turn Him over to us, we want to get rid of Him.

Now, isn't that an interesting climax to a resurrection? Verse 57, that's the climax. Glorious display of power, Lazarus comes bursting out of the grave, Jesus Christ is glorified and they all want to kill Him. Now do you see why God had to send His Son to come, do you see the depths of sin? That's the kind of unbelief God deals with. That's the kind of unbelief that was in my heart before I came to Christ. I'm no better than they are, neither are you. Without Jesus Christ that's what God has to work with, that's the hardness of hearts which the grace of God has to melt into faith.

Listen, any time Jesus displays glory like that, you know Satan's going to get worried, right? And he's going to activate his forces. And, boy, now they came after Jesus full force. The prince of the darkness of this world was threatened and he started to move out.

And isn't it sad that the people were just spectators? Once during the week they're yelling 'King,' the next time they're yelling, "Kill Him." Just spectators, whatever the mob does, whatever the way it goes, they go. And so we see those reactions. Many believed, some decided to kill Him, multitudes just...well, just watched Him. It says on the cross when He was hanging there and they ... the people stood and watched Him there, they were still watching.

Well, the last little group would be Mary, Martha and the Disciples. No more verses left in the chapter, you say, "What happened to them?" I believe their faith was strengthened, don't you? How could it help be strengthened? Jesus said back in verse 15, I'm going to do this miracle, Disciples, to strengthen your faith. And if He said it, I think He did. And by the deed of Martha and Mary in chapter 12 verses 1 to 8, I believe that showed their faith of strength and we'll see that next time.

There they are, friends. Four reactions to Christ, their categorical reactions. How do you react to Christ? Could you believe in Him? Do you reject Him like that second group? Or are you one of the crowd just sort of just looking around to see what it's like? Or are you a Christian who has now had



your faith strengthened by seeing Christ in John chapter 11? What's your reaction to the miracle?  
Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You that Jesus Christ is God, no matter what anybody believes, that His identity is not predicated on somebody's decision but it's predicated on divine truth. Father, we know also that our destiny depends upon how we react. Lord, thank You because there are probably some here this morning who believed, they've today opened their heart to Jesus Christ. They've taken that floating faith and they've attached it to the right object. And then, Lord, may all of us who love You and who are believers be strengthened in our faith because of what we've seen You do in raising Lazarus. Thank You for what we've learned, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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