

One Man to Die for the People

Thomas Robinson, January 17, 2010

John 11:45-57

⁴⁵ Therefore **many of the Jews** who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, **put their faith in him.** ⁴⁶ But **some** of them **went to the Pharisees** and told them what Jesus had done.

⁴⁷ 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.**"* ⁴⁸ *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.**"*

⁴⁹ Then one of them, named **Caiaphas**, who was **high priest** that year, spoke up, *"You know nothing at all!"*

⁵⁰ *You do not realize **that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.**"*

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he **prophesied** that **Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,** ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the **scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.** ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to **take his life.**

⁵⁴ Therefore **Jesus no longer moved about publicly** among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called **Ephraim**, where he stayed with his disciples.

⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the **Jewish Passover**, many went up from the country to **Jerusalem** for their ceremonial **cleansing** before the Passover. ⁵⁶ 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?"**"*

⁵⁷ 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.**

John 1:11-13

¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to **become children of God** – ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God.**

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**"

John 12:30-32

³⁰ Jesus said, ... ³¹ "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And **I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."**

John 17:20-21

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ **that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.** May they also be in us **so that the world may believe** that you have sent me.

Ephesians 2:13-18

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have **been brought near by the blood of Christ.** ¹⁴ For he himself is our **peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ 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,** ¹⁶ and in one body to **reconcile both of them to God through the cross**, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached **peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.** ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the **Father** by one **Spirit.**

What Do You See?

Everyone “had seen what Jesus did” - last, great sign - surely convincing to all. No. John does not focus on those convinced but on the hardening opposition. People saw very different things. For some it enlarged a growing faith; for some it stimulated new faith; for others it excited a sense of danger about Jesus.

Gospel theme: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can't grasp it. (1:5)

“If We Let Him Go On Like This...”

Institutional opposition in temple priests and Sanhedrin (professionally religious). It is nearly impossible for them to see new light breaking in, challenging structures they already live in. Individuals are touched: Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea.

Religion, politics, careers, institutions are at stake. Real political power intimidates. John's sense of irony sets in: They want to save “our place (temple), our nation”; both are lost. They think they can stop one who has power to raise the dead.

Caiaphas – Prophet in Spite of Himself

Caiaphas was a Roman appointee; a Sadducee, one who helped give Sadducees a reputation for harshness. He survived in office 18 years; deposed with Pilate.

He was High Priest that fateful year, embodiment of the corrupt temple, who in plotting to assassinate Jesus, expresses a truth far beyond his own intention. The one who gives life to the dead must die for the people, to save them from perishing. Deep irony: a cynical plot becomes the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

The Nation and the Scattered Children of God

John points us even further. Jesus dies for his own people; climax of Israel's story. But that story point to all of God's creation: all nations are part of that story. All people God created can become “children of God” and share his own life.

Jesus would make them all one! The meaning of that truth was lived out in the early church as Jews and diverse Gentiles, rich, poor, slave, free, men women, all were united in one community. God was creating “one new humanity” in Jesus.

Looking for Jesus

John closes the story of Lazarus with plots swirling. But people are looking for Jesus. Some to stop him, kill him; some to follow him, be called to life. Where are we?