

Some Forfeit Salvation for Earthly Titles and Positions

John 11:45-57

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I. Biblical Context and Historical Background

A. Biblical Context

- a) **Salvation:** Jesus came to offer the world **Eternal Salvation** through **Faith** and **Repentance**. For the sinner to be **reconciled** with God, one must repent of his/her and accept Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, by faith, thereby becoming His disciple. God made the way of **Redemption** so *easy* and *free* that all a sinner must do is to accept Jesus Christ as his/her Savior by faith.
- b) **Jesus, Son of Man:** because Jesus, who is God, was **manifested in the flesh** through His *earthly birth* by the Virgin Mary, He is known as **the Son of Man** in Scripture. His **Incarnation** as described in Luke chapters 1 and 2 fulfills all the prophecies about Him in the Old Testament. His *earthly lineage* is also fully disclosed in Matthew 1:1-25. However, Jesus Christ cannot be compared to any person living or dead such as Moses, David, the prophets, etc.
- c) **Jesus, Son of God:** The Bible fully discloses, affirms and confirms that **Jesus is the One and Only Son of God**. He was with God from the Beginning as indicated in John 1:1-4. That is why Jesus has the Power and Authority to perform astonishing miracles including the **Resurrection of the Dead** as in the case of Lazarus.

B. Historical Background

The Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveal the **unique Identity and Divinity of Jesus** in an extraordinary, awesome and glorious fashion! The Gospels contain *divine words* which capture *revelations* which disclose the Glorious Power and Eternally Magnificent Nature of God, His Plan of Salvation for Humanity and the Eternal Life that can be obtained through Jesus Christ by faith. The Four Gospels reveal **the Manifestation, Unfolding and Fulfillment of God's Plan of Salvation** in the last 3 Years of the Life and Ministry of Jesus on earth. Jesus came not only to affirm, confirm and fulfill what is recorded in the Old Testament, but to also do away with the Old and establish the New as fully disclosed in Hebrews

II. The Lesson: Some Forfeit Salvation for Earthly Titles and Positions

Last week, Rev. Rhyne taught us from John 11 that Jesus has the Power and Authority to Resurrect the Dead as manifested in the case of Lazarus. Understand everything that Jesus taught and did is the context of God's Plan of Salvation. In other words, Jesus was affirming God's Word in the Old Testament and demonstrating the fulfillment of God's Promises! The Resurrection of Lazarus was one of the many miracles Jesus performed during His 3 years earthly Ministry. Raising Lazarus from the dead was also the *prelude* to His own Resurrection which had to happen soon after that. All the

miracles that Jesus performed were designed to open peoples' eyes about the Nature and Power of God and affirm the Promises of God regarding Eternal Salvation. **The Act of Resurrection is about Eternal Life after Death!** So, whoever *believed* the words and miracles Jesus performed can receive Salvation! Unfortunately, some neither believed the eternal words of Jesus nor the miracles that He performed in their presence! *They denied what their own ears heard, and their own eyes have seen!*

What is it that prevents people from accepting the Truth and Eternal Salvation in Jesus Christ? **Unbelief. Rebelliousness. Ignorance. Love of Money, Fame and earthly Power. Unwillingness to let go of sinful life-style. Attachment to earthly titles and position. All of these things mean one thing: rejection of God, His Plan, His Truth and Eternal Salvation!**

Let us now examine verses 45 through 57 with a close attention to verses 46-48.

1. **vv. 45-48:** The Reason Why the High Priests and Pharisees Opposed Jesus.

Verses 47 and 48 reveal why the Jewish Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees fiercely opposed Jesus! ***They didn't want to lose their earthly titles and positions by accepting Jesus as the Son of God who came to offer Salvation to all sinners!*** The popularity of Jesus among the Jews and Gentiles has been spreading throughout Judea, Samaria and surrounding regions! His Truth exposed their lies! His words exposed their false teachings! The Divine Power manifested in the many miracles that Jesus performed confirmed that He is the Son of God! *The one thing they cannot deny is the miracles that Jesus performs!* Too many people have witnessed the many miracles that Jesus performed including the raising of Lazarus from the dead! Nobody can deny that Lazarus has been resurrected because he became a living witness! Therefore, in order to hold on to their titles and positions, they had to do something drastic! So, what did they do?

- a) **Verse 47:** They “**called a meeting of the Sanhedrin**” to discuss how they can stop Jesus from advancing God's kingdom on earth! In order for us to gain clarity of the situation, we need to know some facts about the Sanhedrin. *The Sanhedrin was a political, religious and judiciary entity which ruled over the Jews under the supervision of the foreign governments who occupied the Israelites at that particular time.* Deep study of the Bible reveals that the Israelites ceased to be an independent nation since the **Assyrians** and **Babylonians** ruled over them. During the time of Jesus, they were under the **Roman** rule who took over from the **Syrians**. The **Sanhedrin** was composed of the high priests, Pharisees and Sadducees. Understanding the history allows us to understand how the Israelites have been *compromised spiritually and diminished politically, socially and economically.* This meant that the Glorious days of the Israelites under Moses, Joshua, King David, and King Solomon were *distance memories!* ***It also meant that Spiritually, the Israelites were holding on to traditions, customs and rituals which were devoid of the Presence of God!*** That is why Jesus came to revive, restore, and renew the faith of the Israelites and expand the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles. But the Jewish authorities didn't want to accept anything Jesus came to offer to them as revealed in the next verse!

- b) **Verse 48:** they said, “**If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**” Two things to note:
- “**If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him.**” If the people believe in Jesus, then, they will not believe in what they teach, preach and do. Therefore, their authority will be diminished and they would lose power over the people. *That is why they were so fiercely opposed to everything Jesus said and did!*
 - “**the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**” *There it is!* Understand that the Romans have better control over the Israelites if they work through the Sanhedrin. The high priests and the Pharisees already have great influence over the Israelites. It makes the work of the Roman Governor easier. The Sanhedrin was a buffer for the Romans. *Through the high priests, the Romans avoid the sensitive issue of religion and the implementation of taxation.* It was an arrangement of convenience for the Romans. *It also gave the high priests and the Pharisees some degree of importance and certain privileges.* As long as the people looked up to them for their religion and welfare, their title and positions are secure. *They didn't want Jesus to disrupt this arrangement. **They were determined to do anything to maintain the status quo at the expense of the people!***

That is why they wanted to stop Jesus from declaring the kingdom of God and the Salvation that comes from believing in the Son of God! They didn't want people to learn the Truth, find Freedom and Justice that comes from the Salvation of the Lord! *They needed to keep the people ignorant of the Truth so that they remain under their rule! **What they failed to understand was that no earthly power can stop the Plan of God from being fulfilled on this earth and in the universe!***

2. **vv. 49-53: The Solution to their Problem? They Decided to Kill Jesus!**

The bottom line in this section is verse 53 which reads “**So from that day on, they plotted to take His life.**” The *magnitude and significance* of this decision to “plot and kill Jesus” becomes clearer when we begin to consider the position and role of the high priest in the Old Testament. *According to the Law God gave to Moses, the high priest was the direct appointee and representative of God on earth in all matters concerning the relationship between God and the people of God.* The high priest and the Levites were **set apart** to serve only God and under His direction. Recall that they were supposed to serve only God [**Read Exodus 29 and Leviticus chapters 8 and 9**]. The last time the high priest and the Levites did everything under the requirements of the Law was during the dedication of the Jerusalem Temple [**Read 2 Chronicles chapters 1 through 7**] and many generations later during the reign of King Hezekiah [**as recorded in 2 Chronicles chapters 29, 30 and 31**]. *In between times, the Priesthood and the Israelites dedicated themselves to worshipping idols and serving foreign kings!* So, it was when Jesus came! *That is why there was complete disconnect between Jesus and the Priesthood! Instead of leading people to God, the high priest was dedicated to moving them away from Jesus!*

- *That is why the high priests couldn't relate to anything Jesus taught and did! **That is why they were tightly holding on to their earthly titles and positions under the Roman rule!***

- That is why Caiaphas, the high priest at the time was leading and commanding the Sanhedrin in the plot to kill Jesus, the Son of God!
- *The high priest, Pharisees and Sadducees were so far removed from God that they were totally committed to “plot and kill Jesus” at any cost!*

3. **vv. 54-57: The Jewish Authorities issued an Order to Arrest Jesus**

The Bible says in verse 54, “Therefore, Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead, He withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where He stayed with His disciples.” We need to take note of several things from this verse.

- a) Jesus didn’t go away because He was afraid of the Jewish authorities. He *withdrew* because it was not yet Time for Him to surrender Himself to them as **the Lamb of God!** God’s Plan and Time work differently than ours! Jesus was operating on God’s Time to fulfill the Plan of Salvation!
- b) The Jews were preparing to celebrate the Passover. However, by that time, the Jews were going through the motion – *it was just a yearly tradition devoid of it’s true meaning and significance!* It is just like our tradition of celebrating Christmas which has become more commercialized and about exchanging material gifts than what it should stand for! ***But Jesus came to fulfill everything it was meant to be when God established it during the time He liberated the Israelites from Egypt!***
- c) The Jewish Priests were supposed to consecrate themselves for the Passover celebration. They should have been focused on **repenting for their own sins** and others as the Law requires. They should have been focused on how they might obtain eternal salvation for their own souls! Instead, they were focused on “**plotting to kill Jesus!**” As priests, they should have been focused on the spiritual welfare and the salvation of the people they were leading. Instead, they were focused on trying to save their earthly titles and positions!

So, the Bible says in verse 57, “But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest Him.” What they failed to realize is that God had a different plan for them as well. ***Their own evil deeds will shut the door of their own salvation in Jesus Christ!***

III. Life Application

1. We need to be careful not to hold on tight to earthly titles and positions. Instead, we should be holding on to Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who holds our future!
2. We need to be careful not to engage with traditions, customs and rituals which put distance between God and us!
3. We need to consecrate ourselves to worship God in Spirit and Truth!