

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory of Christ Our Substitute

INTRODUCTION

Christians are familiar with the idea of a prophet. A prophet in the most basic sense is a person who speaks God's truth to others. Prophets had the task of faithfully speaking God's Word to the people. They were instrumental in guiding the nation of Israel and establishing the church. God's household is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" ([Ephesians 2:20](#)).

There are at least 133 prophets in the Bible. Abraham is the first person to be named a prophet. Pastor Josh reminded us a few weeks ago that *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,"* (Hebrews 1:1, ESV) Many of us would think that prophets have certain characteristics, one being holy. As Peter wrote, *"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."* (2 Peter 1:21, ESV)

This morning we're going to be introduced to the most unlikely prophet. We read about him in our text.

TEXT: [John 11:45–57 \(ESV\)](#)

MAIN POINT

The main point that I want you to look for is this: One of the Christian's greatest promises and greatest hopes comes to us through the most unlikely, the most implausible, the most inconceivable prophet!

EXPOSITION

John tells us that there are two reactions to the crowd. Some, thankfully, believe in Jesus after seeing this miracle, others seem compelled to report the events to the Pharisees. Their motivation is suspect, although we're not certain. *"So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.'"* (John 11:47, ESV).

The Pharisees could not in themselves make judicial decisions. Rome had appointed the Sanhedrin to do that. They were the highest court in Israel. Totalling 70 members made up of chief priests, Sadducees and some Pharisees. The concern of the Pharisees and this tribunal was that the popularity of Jesus may spark an uprising, which would lead to a crushing response of Rome on their Temple and their nation. We are then told that *"one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.'"* (John 11:49–50, ESV)

Caiaphas had been appointed by Rome to be the High Priest. Normally the office was a lifelong commitment, but under Rome they picked who they wanted and when. His father-in-law had been the previous High Priest and was still around even at this time. Caiaphas makes a ruling:

“We have a choice,” he intimates, “Either one man die, or we all die.”

Now at this point in John’s record, he jumps in and provides an editorial comment. These comments by the author are very significant. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit and they interpret for us what we just read. From John’s Holy Spirit inspired interpretation¹, we learn:

1. Caiaphas did not say this of “his own accord” or by his own initiative.
2. That John viewed these words as prophetic.
3. The prophecy is that Jesus would die for the nation and to gather the scattered children of God.

There is no reason to assume that Caiaphas viewed his words as prophetic. He was stating his opinion in the middle of a Council meeting. “Unwittingly and in the providence of God, the high priest became a channel of divine revelation.”² “God planned Caiaphas’s words to serve his own purpose. They held greater meaning than Caiaphas had planned. Caiaphas’s intention was evil, but God had ordained the death of Jesus.”³

Once again we see the interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I believe this leads us to the point of this narrative. God decided for Jesus to die. His death was not an accidental tragedy. It fulfilled God’s eternal plan. God sovereignly used the decision of Caiaphas to harmonize with the sovereign decision of the Godhead before the world was created. Note Acts 2:22–23 (ESV):

“²² Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

John MacArthur states it well: “The responsibility for the wicked meaning of his words belonged to Caiaphas, but God’s providence directed the choice of words so as to express the heart of God’s glorious plan of salvation.”⁴

The early Church understood this truth as they prayed: *“for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with*

¹ “He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” (John 11:51–52, ESV)

² Gangel, Kenneth. Holman New Testament Commentary - John: 4 (p. 222). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³ Carter, Matt. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁴ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). [*The MacArthur Study Bible*](#) (electronic ed., p. 1608). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.” (Acts 4:27–28, ESV)

How does John articulate this glorious plan of salvation? It was this: “Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”⁵ This plan of salvation not only applied to the nation of Israel but to the scattered children of God – throughout the world. Some expositors limit this to the scattered Jews, but most understand these words to include even the ingathering of the Gentiles. John has already described the real children of God in his first chapter:

“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11–13, ESV)

John the records these words: “So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.” (John 11:53, ESV). This verse helps us to understand the events that will soon take place. The decision to kill Jesus has not been put into action – an action that we determined by God’s will before eternity.

The public ministry had finished and Jesus isolated himself near the Judean desert, a safe haven for the fugitive he had become. The Passover that Israel sought to prepare for will be like none other.

APPLICATION

There’s a key word that’s easy to overlook both in Caiaphas’s prophecy (John 11:50) and John’s interpretation of it (vv. 51-52): for. You understand the significance a little more if you substitute the words “in place of” or “on behalf of.” Jesus was dying in place of someone else.

When Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for or on behalf of the children of God, he reminds us that someone must satisfy the debt of sin. Only a perfect Lamb could do that and only by shedding his blood. Jesus was not a helpless child; he was a willing Saviour. This sacrifice was not contrary to love; it was the ultimate expression of it. Through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the just wrath of God has been removed, and forgiveness can be offered and fellowship restored between Creator and creature.

It is sad that Caiaphas failed to understand the importance of his words. Indeed the Bible is brilliantly clear on this:

- *“But he was pierced **for our transgressions**; he was crushed **for our iniquities**; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5, ESV)*
- *“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is **given for you**. Do this in remembrance of me.”” (Luke 22:19, ESV)*

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 11:51–52). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

- ***“For our sake** he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)*
- *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and **gave himself for me.**” (Galatians 2:20, ESV)*

Someone has said that the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ is at the heart of the Gospel. That is true, but it’s also the binding on the Bible. The Bible makes no sense at all unless we see from all time, God’s appointed Saviour sent into the world to die for sinners. The Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ hammers our pride. We are faced with the humiliation that “nothing in our hands we bring, simply to the Cross we cling.” The Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ also enables us to understand God. We can see His unflinching, uncompromising hatred of sin; we see His absolute and unchanging justice to punish sin; and yet we see His incomprehensible love and mercy.

The songwriter, Philip Bliss helps us worship at the feet of this truth⁶.

Man of Sorrows what a name For the Son of God who came Ruined sinners to reclaim Hallelujah what a Savior	Bearing shame and scoffing rude In my place condemned He stood Sealed my pardon with His blood Hallelujah what a Savior	Guilty vile and helpless we Spotless Lamb of God was He Full atonement can it be Hallelujah what a Savior
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And then he writes these words: “It’s His mercy and His grace. Drawing me to seek His face. May I do that all my days.”

If we truly have received Christ as Saviour and embraced the truth that He died for me, would it not be reasonable to live one’s life seeking His face, living to His glory and wanting to please Him in all we do. We cannot earn salvation, but we can respond in thankful, worshipful living.

⁶ Glenn Dodson | Philip Paul Bliss © 2004 Dodson, Glenn (Admin. by Giles Glenn Dodson)