

Power of One

SS/HN 30/10/05 am

Reading: John 11: 45-57, Romans 6

Study Text: John 11:51-57

Sing Psalms: 122, 100, 49:1-7, 50:1-4

Bravery awards are given to those who act selflessly, or even risk their life, in the effort to save others from danger or death. Sometimes these awards are given posthumously – maybe a father drowned attempting to save his daughter or a fireman dies trying to save a child from a burning house. Some acts of bravery have saved a group of people – a company of soldiers, a loaded bus or the like.

In this passage and indeed other passages of the Bible we see a man who died to save a nation – and more than that the whole world! Jesus would die to save the nation, John tells us (11:51), he would die *for the whole world* (I John 2:2). He would die to save people from their sins, from spiritual death. No one in all the world can die for the sins of another, except Jesus (Psalm 49:7) . The wonderful news is he died to save you, if you believe in him.

Expediency

The Sanhedrin met to decide what to do about Jesus after he had raised Lazarus from the dead. These religious leaders were jealous at the popularity of Jesus – many Jews believed in Jesus. They had tried many times and in many ways to put a stop to the ministry of Jesus, but he kept on preaching and working many signs. Attempts to trick him in his words, to accuse him of blasphemy and even attempts to stone him had failed – for his hour had not yet come.

The problem with Jesus escalated to the extent that a meeting of the highest council of the Jews was convened. A man called Caiaphas was high priest that year and as such was in charge of this Council. More politician than priest, he told the meeting it would be *expedient for us that one man die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish* (11:50). Having no regard for justice or the law, he declared that it would be best for them if Jesus died.

The high priest prevailed in the meeting and the resolution was carried that Jesus must die (11:53). Jesus *no longer walked openly among the Jews* because of the edict that if anyone saw him they must report it to the authorities (11:54, 57). Jesus was on the list of wanted men. He was declared guilty without any court hearing. He must die in order to save the nation.

Prophecy

The apostle John gives his own inspired comments on this edict (11:51, 52). He says that these words of the high priest have another meaning and that he in fact *prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation*. This wicked high priest was prophesying! How do we understand this?

If it were not for the fact that it is the inspired word of God some heresy hunters would declare this heresy. ‘God cannot speak through an ungodly person’ they say. Caiaphas declared that Jesus should die – he was hardly a godly man! Yet John says *being high priest that year he prophesied* (11:51). We must remember that God spoke of old through the wicked prophet Balaam; and indeed put words into the mouth of Balaam’s donkey! Beware of men who tell you what God can and cannot do.

God is sovereign and if he chooses to make his will known through the words of wicked men – who are you O man to give counsel to God. *Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as his counsellor has taught him* (Isaiah 40:13). *Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!* (Romans 11:33). These things are not easy for us to understand but here it is in Holy Scripture. Let us not stand above Scripture, but rather come humbly before the word of God.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16). Heresy hunters believe this applies to everyone but themselves. How tragic it is when men sit at home on the Lord’s Day to have their own worship because they cannot find a church that agrees with them in their doctrine. Does not Scripture say *let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some* (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

God is sovereign. He dwells in the high and lofty place and with him who has a contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15). God’s ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). If God chooses to take the words of a wicked man and turn them into prophesy, prophesy contained in Holy Scripture, who are you to say he cannot do that!

In God’s wonderful providence, in his overruling providence, the words which Caiaphas spoke had a meaning and a truth far deeper than Caiaphas understood. He spoke of his own free will as far as he was concerned. He spoke of the political reason why Jesus had to die. But at the same time John tells us *he did not say this on his own*. He was speaking of the spiritual reason why Jesus would die.

One Man, One Nation

Jesus would die for the nation, that nation being the spiritual Israel, not the political Israel (Romans 11:26). As shown by subsequent history his death did not save the nation as Caiaphas had thought. In AD 70 Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews scattered. Political Israel perished. But through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the true Israel was revealed – the kingdom of God with Jesus as king.

Jesus came preaching *the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15). *My kingdom is not of this world* said Jesus (18:36). He is king indeed, king in the kingdom of God. This is the kingdom that endures forever. It is the everlasting kingdom that cannot be shaken.

All Israel, the true Israel, will be saved – they will not perish. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah, those who repent and believe the gospel as Jesus said, have a place in this kingdom. *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ* Peter proclaimed at Pentecost (Acts 2:36). He told these Jews *repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ* (Acts 2:38). Jesus died that this true Israel might not perish.

Not for that nation only, but also he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad (11:52). Who are the children scattered abroad? They are the Gentiles (10:16). *But now in Jesus Christ you who were afar off have been brought near by the blood of Christ* (Ephesians 2:13). The spiritual Israel, the children of God, includes Gentiles as well as Jews – this is the mystery Paul wrote about. The children of God are no longer Jews who are descended from Abraham but Jews who are of the faith of Abraham and Gentiles who are of the same faith (Romans 4:16).

The one man Jesus, through his death and resurrection, rules over one nation, the holy nation of the children of God. There will be one flock and one shepherd said Jesus (10:16). Jesus prayed that all who believe in him *may be one, as you Father are in me and I in you, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me* (17:20-21).

Through one man's disobedience (Adam) many were made sinners, so also through the obedience unto death of one man, Jesus, many will be made righteous (Romans 6:19). As the only begotten Son of God, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). You who believe he died for you, you who believe he died bearing your sins, remember he called you to a oneness in the holy nation, the kingdom of God. There are no second class citizens in this holy nation. Jesus gathers his sheep together into one.

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