

Hardened Unbelief

John 11:45-57

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Introduction: In the wake of Lazarus' spectacular and un-ambiguous resurrection John records exactly what we would expect to happen....

John 11:45 ⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

Jesus has totally exposed His true identity to men and the time for fence sitting is over. Jesus has not just made another claim to be God....The Son of the One true God, equal with Him in every way. He has now proven it. The four days in the tomb were orchestrated by Jesus to leave no doubt in anyone's mind that Lazarus was dead. His spirit was departed and his body was beginning to decay. Jesus Himself spent only three days in the tomb in order to fulfill the Messianic Prophecy that said.....

Psalms 16:10 ¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

On the day of Pentecost Peter quoted David's words to the gathered crowd saying...

Acts 2:30-31 ³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

Why am I preaching this sermon: When Jesus said.....

John 11:15 ¹⁵I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe...."

.....He was thinking about this exact outcome. Martha went from believing a doctrine of resurrection to trusting in the God of the resurrection. The same is true of the disciples and now, many of the spectators.

As believers this seems like a fore gone conclusion. The man says He is God....Naturally no one believes Him. Would you believe someone who came into town and told you he was the one true God? Of course not! Jesus did not expect anyone to just embrace something like that even though the prophets, whom they claimed to believe, had been saying it would happen. But.....like us all today.....we are always surprised when something we thought would happen actually does.

So Jesus begins a miraculous preaching tour designed to prove that every word He says is true. He says He is the life giving bread that came down out of heaven and....He makes bread out of thin air to feed thousands of people.

He goes on to claim to be the water of life, the light of the world and then in this chapter He says,

John 11:25-26 I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

When Lazarus walks out of the tomb, bound in his grave clothes a definitive line was drawn between ignorance or doubt and willing unbelief. Many believed in Christ BUT...

John 11:45-48 ⁴⁶ some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸ "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

NOTE: None of God's plans are ever thwarted by willing unbelief. This is a common misconception. It is a feeble attempt to have some control over God and what He does. If I don't believe it, it isn't so. This of course does not work on the universe that God created. If you do not believe in gravity you will still fall when you jump from that cliff. We say in our language..."believing it does not make it true!" Well, the inverse is certainly equally true. "not believing it does not make it false!" That God rules in the affairs of men is an immutable truth.

Proverbs 16:9-10 ⁹ The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

In the closing verses of John 11 we see this truth clearly. The sovereign God of creation uses the mouths of evil men to say what he wants said and their hands to do what He wants done. Let's read the rest together.

John 11:49-57 ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." ⁵¹ Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done: The use of but here is in contrast to believing. Many believed but some went to the Pharisees. So....seeing is not believing! It is not true, as I have heard it said, that if

men see miracles, signs and wonders they will believe in Jesus Christ. If the ones Jesus Himself performed, did not produce universal belief then it is highly doubtful that any preacher today could do better. Going to the Pharisees was a consummate act of unbelief. They went to Christ's enemies while the others stayed near the one they had come to trust in.

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs: Based on the report of these non-believers the Pharisees called an emergency meeting. They do not ask themselves, "what are we going to do?" What they are saying is closer to what the NIV records....

John 11:47 "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.

They looked at one another and said, "What in the world are we doing letting this guy continually perform all these miraculous signs." They realize that the signs are real. They cannot deny the signs. They have been able to just flat out say that they did not believe a thing Jesus said, but this? This is a resurrection from the dead and it goes along with making blind men see and it is infuriating because it cannot be denied by them.

"If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him.": There is no search for truth here. They are past wondering if this is the Christ. Jesus has not allowed them the luxury of just saying, "I didn't know" or "I didn't understand" or "I didn't see any proof." Here is where they spell it out. If we don't stop this guy, everyone will trust Him and believe Him.

"And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." The concern here is that people will begin to follow Jesus and want the promised kingdom. This would be a challenge to the Roman power and they would crush the rebellion and the Pharisees along with it. But notice the order of their concern! "The Romans will come and take away our place." Religionist object to the people following God. Responding to God. Loving God and giving their full allegiance to God.

As the revival fires of faith in Christ swept Europe, the Roman church, like the Pharisees in Christ's day convened a counsel on December 13, 1545. The preaching of the Cross had to be stopped. Whole countries were being converted to the notion that they could repent of their sins and embrace Christ and His sacrificial work for them on the cross and be saved by faith alone, in Christ alone through the Scripture alone

CANON 12: "If any one says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified ... let him be accursed"

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those **who believe in His name,**

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified **by faith** apart from works of the Law.

Romans 4:3 ³ For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Hebrews 7:25-27 ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

2 Timothy 1:12 ¹² For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom **I have believed** and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

In the church today there are many who object to justification by faith alone. "What about our baptism that WE did?" "What about the money that WE gave?" "What about the church services that WE attended?" "What about the works of charity that WE performed." Not much has changed in 2000 years when Christ is preached directly from the Scripture and not from the catechism or confession.

Titus 3:4-5 ⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all": This is the humble voice of reason. "The rest of you are a bunch of fools and you know nothing. I am the grand honcho here and because of my position I have superior knowledge. Again.... Unregenerate human character on display. If I have the position and the power then I am superior even in my knowledge. This was why the Pharisees could not receive any of Christ's teaching. He had not earned His credential. He was not one of them. He did not have the robe, the money, the degree, the pedigree or the title.

This is why the Anabaptists were run to ground by the organized church. It is why the Pilgrims were driven out of England....not by the godless.....but by the church! They were trying to speak the truth of God to those who only listened to themselves.

"Nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.": This is where God begins to demonstrate His Sovereign control over the wicked.

Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation: Balaam would have been a good model for Caiaphas to have studied. He wanted the riches Balak offered him to curse Israel, but what came out of his mouth was always a blessing instead. God gave

him zero credit for those blessings because they were God's Words and Balaam was a wicked man used by God for His purposes.

2 Peter 2:15-16 ¹⁵ forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of **Balaam**, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

The wicked always think they are doing and saying whatever they please, but they are always wrong. We live in a day where our leaders think they can do whatever they want with no regard to right or wrong and certainly no regard for God. David describes them as well as their fate:

Psalm 73:8-12 ⁸ They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. ⁹ They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth. ¹⁰ Therefore his people return to this place, And waters of abundance are drunk by them. ¹¹ They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?" ¹² Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased *in* wealth.

Psalm 37:13-15 ¹³ The Lord laughs at him, For He sees his day is coming. ¹⁴ The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow To cast down the afflicted and the needy, To slay those who are upright in conduct. ¹⁵ Their sword will enter their own heart, And their bows will be broken.

And not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad: It is easy to think take up the position that I have often heard that Jesus came for Israel and since she rejected her own Messiah God rejected her and went to the Gentiles instead. This is the basis for the rejection of the Earthly Kingdom of Christ by many churches today. But....It has always been God's plan to save both Israel and a People for his own name from among the nations. We call that later group the church of Christ. The Apostles knew this and proclaimed it.

Acts 15:14-18 ¹⁴ "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people **for His name.** ¹⁵ "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, ¹⁶ 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, ¹⁷ SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' ¹⁸ SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

So from that day on they planned together to kill Him: The day of the greatest miracle of Christ gave birth the most vile murder of all time. But not apart from God's sovereign and meticulous oversight. God uses evil men for His Own Purposes!

Acts 2:22-23 ²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by

the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.

Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples: Jesus was not afraid of these guys. He was not trying to save His life! He was in charge of the events and it was determined before the foundation of the world that He would die at a predetermined time.

Galatians 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves: It was this Passover that Jesus would fulfill. Every symbol of the law surrounding this highest feast would be totally fulfilled by Jesus. He would enter Jerusalem on the exact day and hour when the Passover Lamb was chosen by each family. He was the spotless male having never sinned. He would die on the exact day and at the exact hour that the Passover Lamb was slain.

1 Corinthians 5:7 Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

The Pharisees could fume and threaten. Our government can say and do what it likes, but God rules in the affairs of men. He determines the outcome of things that appear random.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

He is not restrained when men and governments mock him.

Psalm 115:1-3 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. ² Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?" ³ But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

He controls the storms and natural occurrences.

Psalm 135:6-7 ⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. ⁷ He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.

He sends natural disasters and catastrophes for His purposes

Amos 3:6 ⁶If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?

AND.....He creates and uses evil men for His own purposes.

Proverbs 16:4-5 ⁴ The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil. ⁵ Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished

⁵⁶ So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

CONCLUSION: God is in control of EVERYTHING. I know you are tempted to believe differently, but you would be wrong. I left out dozens of other passages that affirm this truth. God even controls the activities of animals.

1 Kings 17:2-4 The word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³ "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴ "It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

This matters greatly to believers living in troubled times. We don't think about it or frankly much care about this when our bank accounts are full and the future seems bright. When our health is good, or at least we can have health care we don't give a lot of thought to these things. When we are free to pursue our lives and happiness. When our kids are all okay and everybody has a job. But these are not those days.

God wants us to know this truth about Him. You can do one of two things with it and they both involve trust or the lack thereof. You can believe that he is not telling the truth about being in control. This is the preferred view of most of humanity and much of the church. God is just getting by in a messed up world like the rest of us...doing the best He can. Or...you can chose to believe everything God says about Himself...His power and His purpose and His plan for His Creation. But if you do chose this "road less traveled" then you will need to also need to trust the fundamental goodness and justice of God.

Psalm 145:8-11 ⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. ⁹ The LORD **is good** to all, And His mercies are over all His works. ¹⁰ All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, And Your godly ones shall bless You. ¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom And talk of Your power;

Godly men have always known that such commitment is the source of Peace in a troubled world. David lived in troubled times, but he knew God was both sovereign and good.

Psalm 29:1-11 A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in holy array. ³ The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; The God of glory thunders, The LORD is over many waters. ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful, The voice of the LORD is majestic. ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, And Sirion like a young wild ox. ⁷ The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire. ⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹ The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve And strips the forests bare; And in His temple everything says, "Glory!" ¹⁰ The LORD sat *as King* at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as King forever. ¹¹ The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.