

Sovereign Over the Schemes of Man

Jesus Gathers God's People by his Death and Resurrection

John 11:45-57

Aaron Lee | Youth Worship | June 12, 2022





Epigraph

Just as the telescope and microscope show us that there is order and design in all the works of God's hand, from the greatest planet down to the least insect, so does the Bible teach us that there is wisdom, order and design in all the events of our daily life.

There is no such thing as "chance", "luck", or "accident" in the Christian journey through this world. All is arranged and appointed by God: and all things are 'working together' for the believer's good (Rom. 8:28).

(Day by Day with J.C. Ryle, "Compassion", [Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2004], 26.)

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Introduction

There are people with evil intentions and hidden agendas in this world. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9) Racist hate. Sexual abuse. Mass shootings. We've seen how these scenarios are carried out. They begin hidden in the heart. What good can come when people have evil intentions? What good can come when the wicked hearts of man carry out their evil plans?

Context

God's people were not strangers to secret plots and plans. At this point in our journey through the book of John, the animosity between Jesus and the Jewish leaders had come to a breaking point. Even though he was performing miracles, they were blinded by their pride and unbelief. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. This was his biggest, most incredible miracle so far. We're going to see how they respond, and how God remains in control.

Movements

We're going to see three movements in our story. They're like acts in a play to move the narrative along. My goal is that you will see God's sovereign hand behind the story, how God can control evil for good, moving you to worship.



1. The Problem

*Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. **If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**” (John 11:45-48)*

Our first movement in the story is The Problem. The Jews had a problem with Jesus’ many miracles. These miracles put the religious leaders at risk. With the resurrection of Lazarus, they were sure that this would be the start of a revolution. The people would make Jesus their revolutionary leader.

The Selfish Sanhedrin

The council that was gathered by the chief priests and the Pharisees was the Sanhedrin. They were a Jewish council that the Romans put in place and allowed to rule. So you can see why the Sanhedrin were scared. They were concerned that Jesus would begin a revolution, seeking to overthrow the Roman government. This would cause the Romans to come and take away their place of power and their need in the nation. Look at how they say that the Romans will take away our place and our nation. This is selfish ambition. This is personal gain. Under the guise of protecting their people, their nation, their hearts are actually full of pride – not wanting to give up their place and position of power.

Application

Are there areas in your life that you fear giving over to God? Are you afraid of losing power or status because of your commitment to Christ? You cannot hide your heart from God. You cannot serve both God and money. You cannot serve both God and man. You cannot serve both God and yourself. Instead of allowing your heart to become cold and callous, learn to love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30)



2. The Prophecy

*But 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.” 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 11:49-52)*

Our second movement is The Prophecy. Caiaphas had been high priest for 18 years. This is a long time to be in a high position of power. He doesn't want to let it go. He's so prideful. And he thinks he's crafty. He thinks he's cunning. He's looking for an expedient way to exterminate Jesus. So he hatches a plot. Again, under the guise of saving the people, the nation, he says that they should just put Jesus to death. He says that if Jesus dies, they can save the nation. Sacrifice one man, save the entire nation. Make Jesus the scapegoat. Do you hear the irony? On this side of the cross, these are all terms we use as Christians, and Caiaphas had no idea.

The Suffering Servant and The Good Shepherd

Jesus fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah, stating that a Suffering Servant would die for the nation, and not for the nation only:

*he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as **a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**” (Isaiah 49:6)*

And Jesus spoke earlier in John, describing how the Good Shepherd would die to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad:

*just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And **I have other sheep that are not of this fold.** I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10:15-16)*

On a superficial level, this is a political move. It's a hit job. But on a spiritual and supernatural level, this is a prophecy. Capiaphas had no idea what he was saying. It wasn't of his own accord. But he was telling a prophecy of Jesus' substitutionary atonement. Jesus will die for both Jews and Gentiles who believe and put their faith in him. For those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

The Promise of Propitiation

What is it specifically about Jesus' death that fulfills the promise of this prophecy? The apostle John emphasizes it in his epistle:

*He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also **for the sins of the whole world.** (1 John 2:2)*

Jesus is a propitiation for our sins, meaning he bore the wrath of God for our sins. God's wrath would be satisfied by the punishment of his Son. And Jesus' sacrifice would be for the sins not only for Jewish believers, but for the body of believers around the whole world.

Application

We do not know who God has chosen to save. There are sheep that are scattered, and Jesus has given us the Great Commission. We must preach to everyone, taking every opportunity to share the Good News.



3. The Plot

The third clue to Jesus' true identity is that he is the lifted up Son of Man. He lays it out in this way:

***So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.** Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" **Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.** (John 11:53-57)*

Our third movement is The Plot. There was a conspiracy to kill Jesus. There is so much irony in that they went to Passover to purify themselves. But their hearts were unclean. They had murderous intentions. Jesus knows their hearts. And Jesus knows their plan. Jesus sovereignly knew about their schemes. He knew about their secret meeting to put him to death, and he acted strategically. He no longer walks openly, and he will give himself up at the right time.

The Control of the Cross

Jesus is in control of when he goes to the cross. Back in John 10, Jesus said: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." (John 10:18) And the apostles preached that Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. (Acts 2:23) We know that they weren't going to arrest him to give him a fair trial — they had made up their minds to murder him.

Application

Know that nothing happens without the knowledge of God. God grants permission to everything that happens. This knowledge should free you from a life of fear, giving you the courage to live for Christ. You can trust him in trials and tragedies. You can truly give your life to him. You are safe from the schemes of man. You are safe in his sovereign, saving hand.



Big Idea

When we look at our three movements we see that Jesus is sovereign over the schemes of man and gathers God's people by his death and resurrection. This is our big idea: Jesus is sovereign over the schemes of man and gathers God's people by his death and resurrection.

God's sovereign hand was behind the story. He was writing something wonderful. He was authoring an awesome ending. When the wicked hearts of man carry out their evil plans, God will work it out for good. Trust his sovereign, saving hand.

The True and Better Joseph

Jesus is going to die for and save some of the Jews who would betray him. This was foreshadowed in the Old Testament story of Joseph. After being betrayed by his brothers and sold, he would save them and forgive them. Look at what he said at the end of his story:

*As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:20)*

You meant it for evil, God meant it for good. This was Joseph's understanding, and it was proved to be true in Jesus Christ, with his death and resurrection. This makes Jesus the true and better Joseph, ultimately showing that God controls evil for good.

Gospel

Now this leads us to ask the question: Does God care about my pain and suffering? It's easy to say that God is in control. But how do I know that he cares? The Apostle Paul has an answer:

*He who did not spare his own Son but **gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)*

We know God cares by looking at the cross. Jesus' suffering on the cross, his sacrifice for our sins, is a guarantee that God loves us. And because God gave his Son, we can be sure that God will be gracious to us. If you believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died for your sins and was resurrected again, you can be certain that God will give you everything we need to persevere in this life, and he will keep his promise to give you everlasting and eternal and abundant life. Cast your anxieties on the Lord – he cares for you and he will keep you. (1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:2)

Applications

There are many ways to apply this text. We can trust God, knowing that he is in total control over our situations and circumstances. In trials and tragedies, will you trust him? If God is sovereign over big things, surely he is sovereign over small things. Think about your college admissions. He controls both hands and hearts:

*The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; **he turns it wherever he will.** (Proverbs 21:1)*

Next, look at the example of Jesus, forgiving others who sin against you. We can forgive our friends and family, but Jesus calls us to even forgive our enemies. Think about those who try to take advantage of you or get ahead of you, embarrass you or belittle you. Think about those who want to compete with you for a starting position, for first chair, or to be at the top of the class. And Jesus doesn't just forgive. He takes action to love. It's amazing that Jesus would go to the cross for sinners, fully knowing they planned evil against him:

*but God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** (Romans 5:8)*

Finally, look at the life of Paul, someone who experienced epic persecution. Paul was put in prison for preaching the Gospel. He did not see it as a hindrance to the Gospel. Instead, he saw how his situation served to help advance the Gospel. Think about changing schools and moving away from college. No matter your position or wherever he has placed you, we can take opportunities to advance the Gospel and give glory to God:

*I want you to know, brothers, that **what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,** so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. (Philippians 1:12-13)*

Conclusion

There are people with evil intentions and hidden agendas in this world. God's people are not strangers to secret plots and plans. What good can come when people have evil intentions?

*And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

When the wicked hearts of man carry out their evil plans, God will work it out for good. Trust his sovereign, saving hand. There will come a day when evil plans will be punished. Wicked hearts will face God's wrath. And the same hand that held us all along will wipe every tear away from our eyes:

***He will wipe away every tear from their eyes**, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4)*



Closing Prayer

From the smallest details
To our biggest days –
You're in control!
You hold us safe.

In the fleeting seconds
And the passing years –
You reign supreme!
We shall not fear.

For at the cross
Your Son did die,
But when he rose
He brought new life!

And there he proved,
So all would see
O'er sin and death
You rule as King!

And when the wicked
Hearts of man
Carry out
Their evil plans,

God will work it
Out for good.
Trust his sovereign,
Saving hand.

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