

The Scattered Children of God

John 11:45-57

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the great dividing line in human history. The Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead. But not all believed in him. Some did, but others went to the Pharisees to report on the activities of the Lord. They did not mean to help him.

Whatever the motivation of the people who wished him harm, the stumbling block for many, which keeps them from coming to Christ, is the fear of losing goods or status in this life. The “council,” that is the Sanhedrin, gathered together to discuss the “crisis” that they believed had come with the performance of an undeniable miracle, the miracle of resurrection from the dead. They reasoned that, if Christ continued to perform miracles, the people would become his followers, and that would be interpreted by the Romans as a rebellion in the making. They said, “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.”

Consider the hardness of heart that is revealed here. Christ was doing miracles; no one denied that. The Jews were known for demanding miracles as proof of a work of God. But in this case they were more concerned about the possibility of losing their power, their status, and their wealth. That trumped everything. They had to dispose of this troublemaker.

It is at this point that a strange thing happened. Caiaphas, who was no friend of Jesus, was moved by the Spirit of God to speak prophecy. We are told that this was done as high priest, and not of his own accord. He said, “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.” (11:49b-50)

John then observes that Jesus would die for “the nation” and adds that he, by his death, would gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. It seems that Caiaphas’ prophecy included this truth. The Lord would die for non-Jews as well. He would gather a people for the glory of God from among the Gentiles. This was too much for them! They began to plot his death from that point on.

Salvation is grounded in the substitutionary death of Christ. His death brought into being a church, a congregation composed of both Jews and Gentiles. This is the true church of our Lord. It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the stone which is described as the “head” of the corner. This probably is the keystone which bears the great load of the structure and holds everything together.

This church is organically constructed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul taught the Corinthians that this baptism places us all into the body of

Christ, which is his church. We are born again by the Spirit, sealed to God by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, and baptized into the church by the work of God's Spirit.

In other words, the Holy Spirit takes the benefits of the atoning death of our Lord and applies them to each of us. This church is described as a great multitude (the death of the Lord has a very large application), from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. (Revelation 7:9)

What was the purpose of this? The Lord intends to have a blood bought people to be saved for their good and for his eternal glory. It was always the purpose of God to save a people, not just from among the Jews, but from the nations. This work of God's grace has been going on down through the centuries even beginning to a degree in Old Testament times.

The apostle Peter put it this way, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)

These words remind us of the prophecy of Hosea. The Lord had turned away from a rebellious Israel but promised future restoration. Now that time of restoration had come. Christ had died for sinners on the cross and both Jews and Gentiles would become the building blocks of a new nation, a holy nation. No one would be able to boast in themselves because in truth one man had died for the people, and that one man was Jesus of Nazareth.

By Joe Nesom