



March 12, 2023

“The Way of Men”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

Wednesday Evening Classes 6:30-8:00

Resurrection Sunday April 9th – Communion Brunch to Follow

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- 1) The extraordinary fashion of God is...
 - 2) Jesus was indeed the Great I AM made flesh and blood man...
 - 3) God has Life within Himself and can bestow that upon anyone or anything He wishes...
 - 4) God doesn’t play by the rules, God literally makes the rules...
 - 5) God alone can alter physical reality...
 - A) One ditch is...
 - B) The other ditch is...
 - C) The path is...
 - 6) “Jesus wept.” That is outrageous! God among us saw our human plight and was emotionally moved to tears...
 - 7) God delayed acting until there was no hope at all left for Lazarus.

John 11:45–54 ~

We get another adversative meaning that while many believed, some did not. The more opinionated ones ran to tattletale on Jesus.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Verse 47, “the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council meeting.” “A council meeting” is the Greek word συνέδριον (sün-ěd-rě-ön), the official title of the Jewish ruling council – the Sanhedrin.

The High Priest with the most senior claim was Annas. His son-in-law Caiaphas ended up serving 18 years, which was a feat.

The majority of the elites were Sadducees...

The Zealots were terrorists...

The Essenes were isolationists...

The Pharisees were orthodox...

The primary stated concern was that the people would turn to Jesus, which implies away from them. That’s not only a loss of power and prestige, it’s also a legitimate concern about a revolution that Rome would certainly crush.

The underlying reason was pure unadulterated jealousy.

Caiaphas chastised the group basically saying that it was time to maneuver this into a Roman problem.

Caiaphas, without any conception of the Truth, stated it plainly.

No religion in history is as inclusively exclusive as Christianity (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, I Timothy 2:5, Romans 6:23, Revelation 5:8&9 & Philippians 2:5–13, etc.).

Men do all kinds of evil things distorting what is good and noble and decent into what is profane, unprincipled, and disgraceful. God allows us to mess things up and He will use that vile corruption for His purposes.

Again, you can be a cooperative vessel of honor through whom God works, or you can be an unwitting instrument of wrath through whom God works. God will accomplish His plans one way or another, the question is how you will fit into His plans.

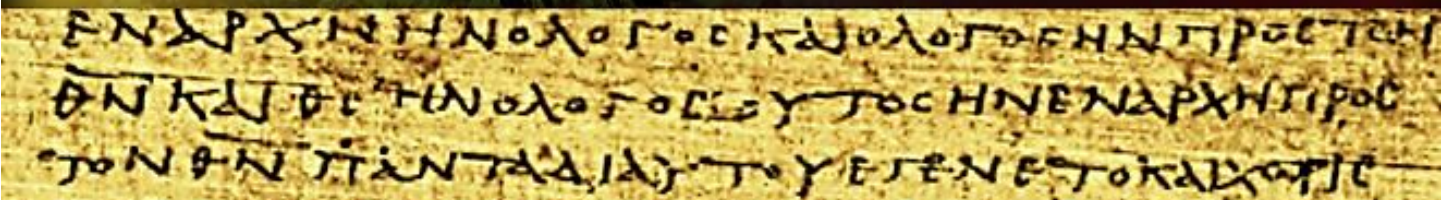
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



Lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Last week we saw Jesus raise Lazarus from beyond the grave in extraordinary fashion.



1) Not the extraordinary fashion of the “Name it and Claim it” Faith Healers of today. Not with a big show, stomping around, waving His arms, challenging ole Clubfoot, and whipping the crowd into a frenzy.

Jesus simply thanked the Father, and that was only for the benefit of those around Him, and He commanded Lazarus to present himself.

The extraordinary fashion of the Lord is to calmly demonstrate His entire mastery over death, and that, even before He formally conquered death on a Cross.

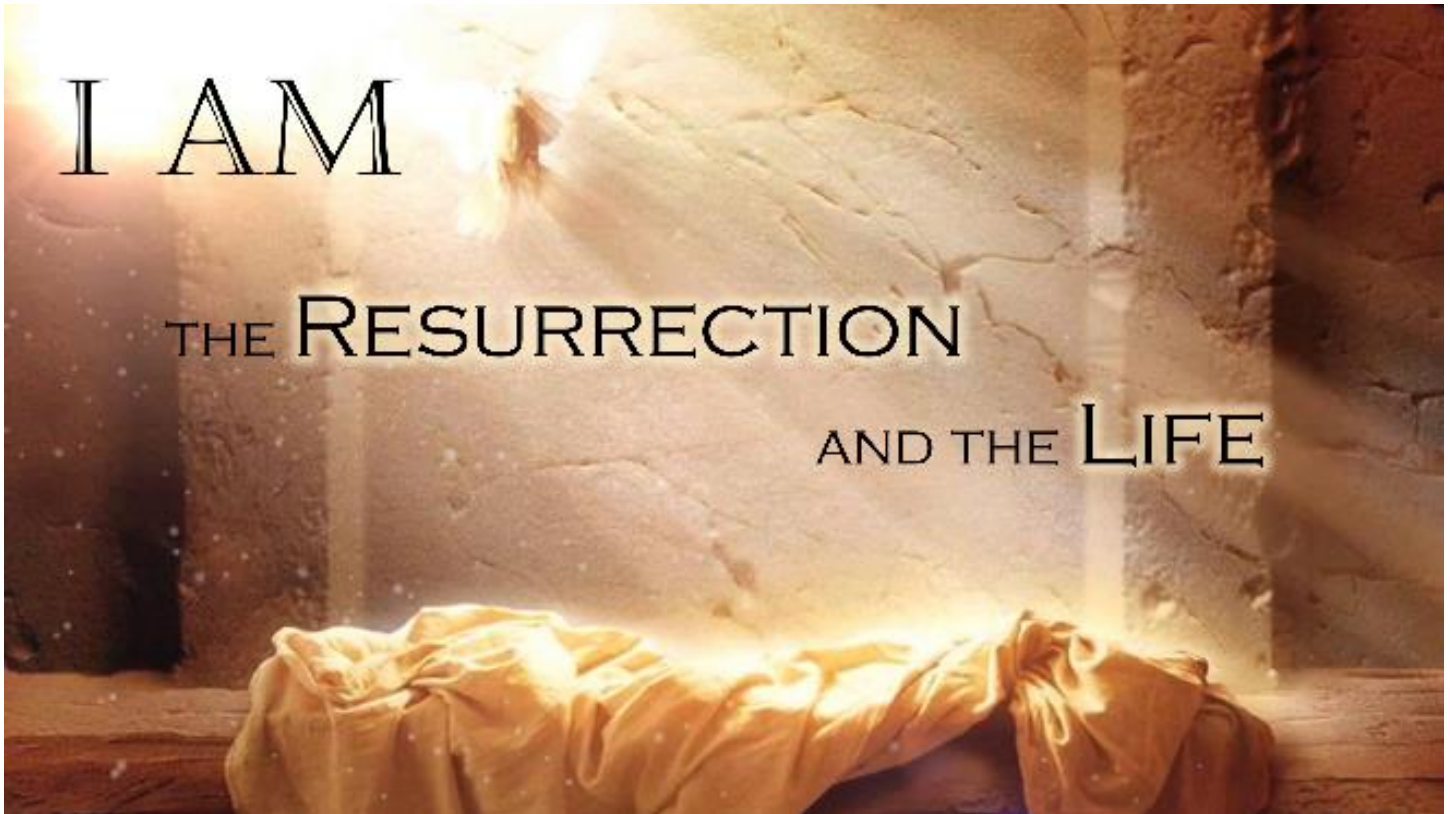


2) That tells us some more things, not the least of which is that Jesus was indeed the Great I AM made flesh and blood man.

Show me a person who can alter DNA at a touch by giving sight to a man born blind – and I'll show you God. Show me a person who can command a soul, four days beyond the veil in Sheol, back into his former body – and I'll show you God.

3) God has Life within Himself and can bestow that upon anyone or anything He wishes. Not just physical animation and not just sentient physical life, but eternal existence apart from Him as well as the truest sense of

life possible, “Abundant Life” in Him forever without end.



That Life generating and sustaining force is found in God’s Word, Jesus the Christ, our Lord, Savior, brother, and friend – praise His Holy Name! That was within His purview with or without the Cross.

4) This is an important Biblical concept... God doesn’t play by the rules, God literally makes the rules. He could have done anything He wanted with respect to us.

Not create us in the first place. Create us to be more docile, compliant, and servile. Create us and let us all

perish. Create us and make any sort of obstacle course, hoop-jumping exercise, He thought prudent for the top 10% of us to earn our way to Heaven. What He chose, was to be our Salvation at tremendous personal cost.

The One True God over the entire universe and beyond, chose to send a bit of Himself to be a mere man.

God became a man. Who would give life to another man, which would cost Him His Own life in the process. Ironically, that very loss of His life, then gave the possibility of the ultimate Abundant Life to all man, in accordance with God's desired plan. Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, died horrifically, hated, reviled, unrecognized, and misunderstood, in order to Save us, while we were still His enemy. It would be like Zelenskyy discovering that Putin needed a heart transplant and giving him, his own heart. It makes no human sense at all.

God did it to show in this actual physical reality His character to us... His absolute Holiness and His unconditional Love. God is Holy and God Loves you... What are you going to do about that?

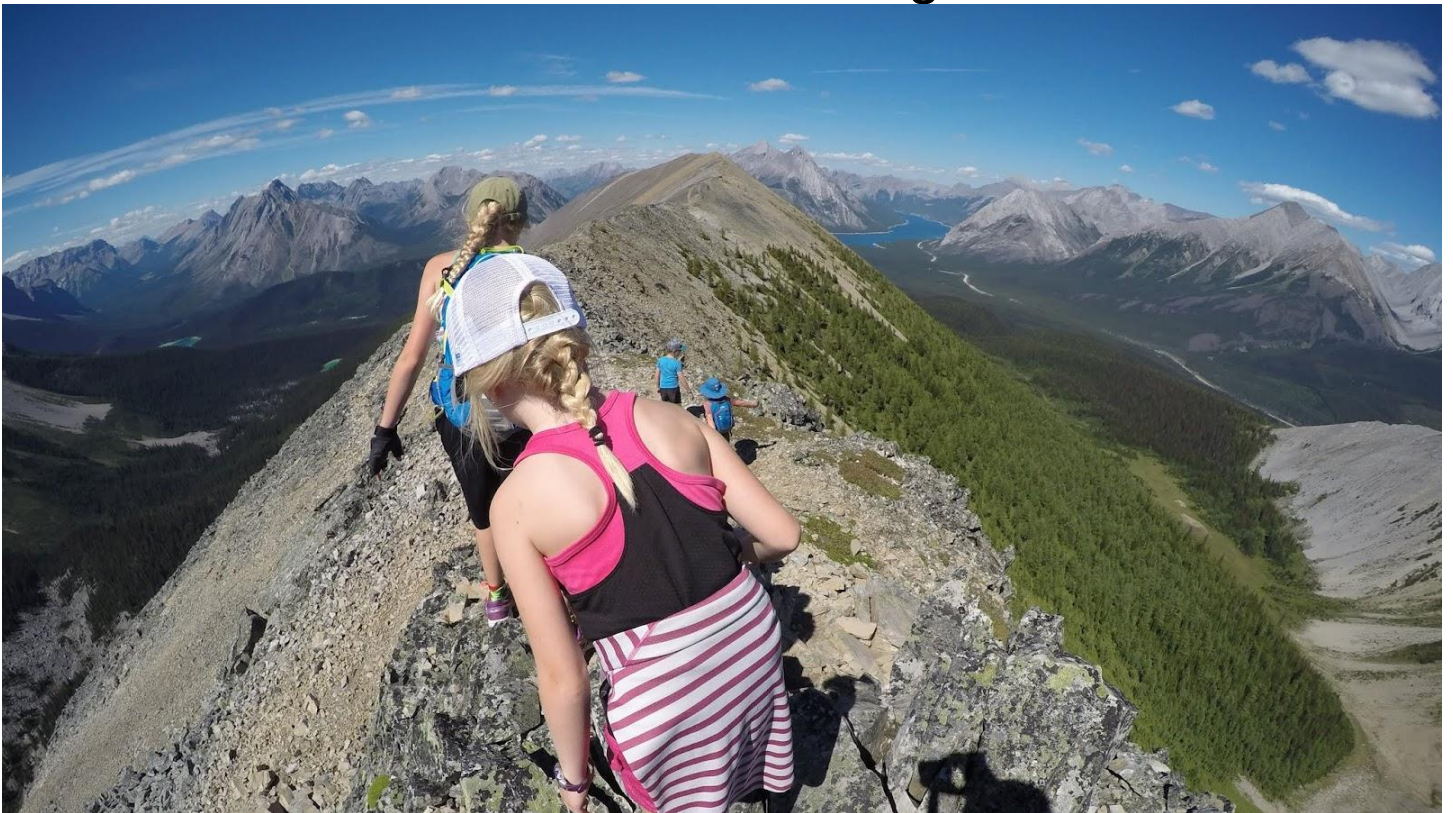


5) Another thing that we glean from the raising of Lazarus is it is God alone Who alters reality. There are, for us, an indeterminable number of variables affecting the physics depicted in this picture – that’s the genesis of Chaos Theory. But, make no mistake about it, whatever happens is perfectly calculable to God. What that means is physics is. Even at the quantum level there is no “uncertainty,” no “spooky action at a distance,” no “quantum tunneling,” that is random. Just because we can’t know where a particle is and where it’s going at the same time, doesn’t mean that it isn’t following a perfectly predictable course. God knows, and because He does, it means that the physical is purely physical, and that means that the physical, like

you and me, cannot alter the physical except physically.

All of that to say, that in our reality there is no such thing as magic – there's only physics. As a corollary, just because we can't agree upon Truth, doesn't mean that Truth is subjective. Why? Because God knows the Truth about everything, and because of that fact, Truth is objective, whether we can grasp it or not.

Both of these somewhat related concepts are important to accept because doing so lays a foundation upon which to build correct understanding.



I bring it up because there is a huge misconception in Christianity that runs in two opposing ditches. It's interesting that so many things in Christianity end up this way. There's a very correct path that is very narrow, like a ridgeline. It has ditches running parallel, like the massive drop-offs on either side of a ridge. For some reason, we prefer the ditches to the path. I suppose it feels safer, but you certainly miss the view. Since we often travel along the valleys instead of along the ridgeline and since we know we are supposed to be up there, we invent ways to convince ourselves that the ditch is the path. Now, because of that, I may tweak some of you a bit with what I'm going to say – if so, stay with me and I'll show you which ditch you think is the path.

In our case today, one ditch is the erroneous idea that we human beings can be endowed with God's power over His physical laws. The second ditch is that the demonstration of God's power over His physical laws has ceased.

The actual path... in other words, the Truth... is that God, and only God, can suspend and break His physical laws and that He still does that all the time. What am I saying? God's celestial interference, His

supernatural intervention, and His miraculous intrusion, into the physical realm has never ended... But it is Him, never us doing it.

By way of example... The preservation of His written Word through thousands of years is a celestial interference in the affairs of man.

The Salvation of an individual person is a supernatural intervention into the corporeal sphere by a beneficent Savior-Creator. The subsequent granting of the indwelling Holy Spirit to such a person is obviously a miraculous intrusion of the Heavenly into the earthly.

And as phenomenal as all that is, it doesn't scratch the surface of what God's doing in our world... now. Genuine acts of God take place all around us all the time – God has not taken a break, let alone a leave of absence. He's ancient, sure, but nowhere near retirement age. As Jesus said, "My Father is always working, and so am I" (John 5:17 NLT).

The other side is that no human being can affect our physical reality with metaphysical means. For a human to attempt such a thing is witchcraft. It is by definition trying to get your will done in Heaven, rather than

God's Will done on earth. It is for your glory, not for His glory.

Anytime a human seeks to influence the timeline it is A) first of all what they believe it should be and that is insane arrogant presumption when compared to God's plan. So, it is your will over His. B) Secondly, it is always for our personal glory even when we desperately pretend that it isn't. We want someone to know that it was us who effected the change, even if it is only us who knows that.

The correct path in all cases, including this one, is to recognize Who Jesus is and what Jesus actually did and then follow His example as a human disciple of His. That means that it all starts with an intimate personal relationship with Almighty God. That's being on the ridge.



Jesus did not pray for Lazarus to be revived. What happened was that Jesus was in perfect communion with the Father continuously and as such the Father revealed to Jesus that it was His Will that Jesus delay two days by the Jordan River, then travel two days up from there to Bethany, and then call Lazarus forth from the grave. Jesus was ever on Holy Ground. As the old Pentecostals used to say, He was “Prayed up,” He was “In tune with the Holy Spirit,” Always.

Real miracles wrought by God require no special anything from us humans – anything that we do in that regard only serves to put the focus on us, rather than the One Who’s actually effecting the change. That’s

anything from exorcisms to increasing someone's faith, and from raising a dead person, to healing a common cold.

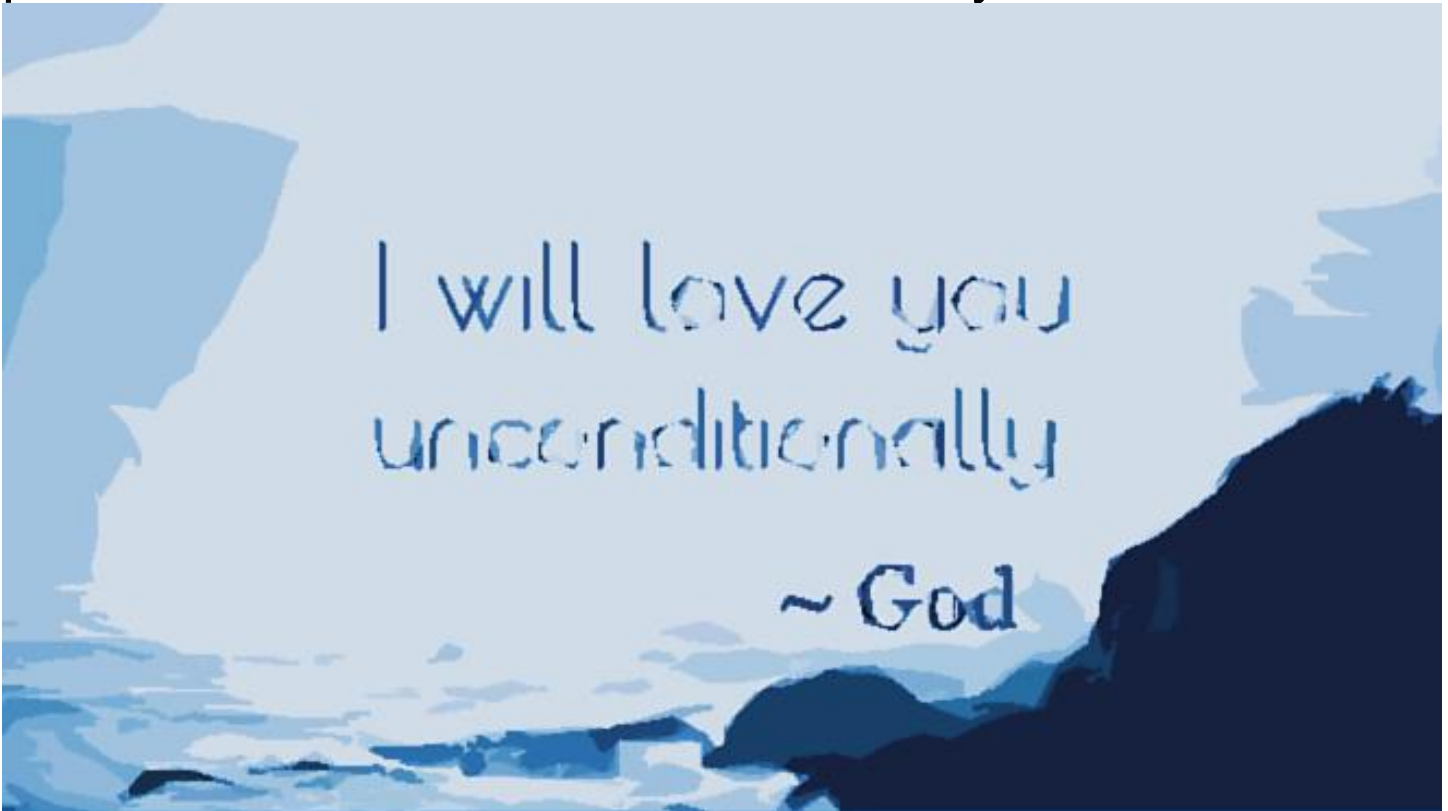
Whatever God's going to do, He knows that He's going to do it long before a human is involved. The key is to find out what God's decided to do and be the empty vessel through whom He works in the way that He wants to work through you.

For Jesus in the raising of Lazarus the Father wanted everyone there, and everyone hearing the account subsequently, to know that Jesus exists as the "Resurrection and the Life." That's why Jesus looked up and thanked the Father and that's why that may not be part of how God chooses to use you.

Will you allow God to use you for His purposes if it makes you look like an idiot, or if no one ever knows that you were involved at all, or if it costs you personally something you treasure, perhaps even your life?

Why don't we see miracles in 21st century America? Maybe because we are too concerned about how it will affect us and our lifestyle to fully surrender to whatever

God would have for us. Perhaps because we are too distracted with all that we have to be continuously in perfect communion with God. Possibly it's both.



6) Another thing that we can glean from chapter 11 is the intense love that God has for you and me. "Jesus wept." That is outrageous! God among us saw our human plight and was emotionally moved to tears.

Evil exists because God loves so much that He won't force us to obey Him. That's love. What's an even greater love than that, is although we constantly choose rebellion, God Himself suffered to provide a way back to Him. Eternal life in perfect harmony with

Him and each other... Here, in this church, and many others around the globe, we get a taste... just a taste.

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus our great “High Priest can empathize with our weaknesses because He became one of us and was tempted in all things just as we are.” God knows your plight and it has driven Him to do something about it. Something extreme and yet, because of love, something that you must embrace for it to be effective.



7) That brings us to another Truth. God delayed acting until there was no hope at all left for Lazarus. All hope had died after he was four days dead. Only when there was no possible way, did God make a way. It's often,

only when all human hope is finally lost, that God acts. Maybe we would see God act more often if we relied less on our solutions – it's just a thought.

We are so frequently impatient with God and when we are, we're like Hank Williams Jr. – we're just carrying on a family tradition. Eve was impatient to know more. Abraham and Sarah were impatient for an heir. Martha and Mary were impatient for a healing. Trust God entirely and I guarantee that He will make everything work out far better than any of us could ever think or imagine.

It will likely be in a way that never occurred to us, and it may not be fully revealed until we're all together in His presence in Heaven, but I promise that if you fully trust Him, it will end up perfectly good.

As New Testament scholar Edward Klink put it, "If God delays in responding to our crisis (as he did for Lazarus in v. 6), that does not mean he does not love us or is not being purposeful in regard to our plight. This pericope urges the Christian to look for the glory of God in every circumstance, even if (and maybe emphatically so) the result does not appear to meet the demand—our demand. Because "Christ is the unique

mirror of the divine grace,” Christians are exhorted by this pericope to claim the life Christ offers over their own standards for life.”

Jesus asked Martha, “Do you believe?” Well, He’s asking us the very same thing today. Do you really believe? Do you believe with all your heart that Almighty God dwelt among us because He loves us and that He has already provided for you a perfect and an eternal solution to every problem you have had, are having and will ever have? “Do you believe this?”

John 11:45–54, 45Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.



46But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. 47Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council meeting, and they were saying, “What are we doing in regard to the fact that this man is performing many signs? 48If we let Him go on like this, all the people will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take over both our place and our nation.” 49But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50nor are you taking into account that it is in your best interest that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish instead.” 51Now he did not say this on his own, but as he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus

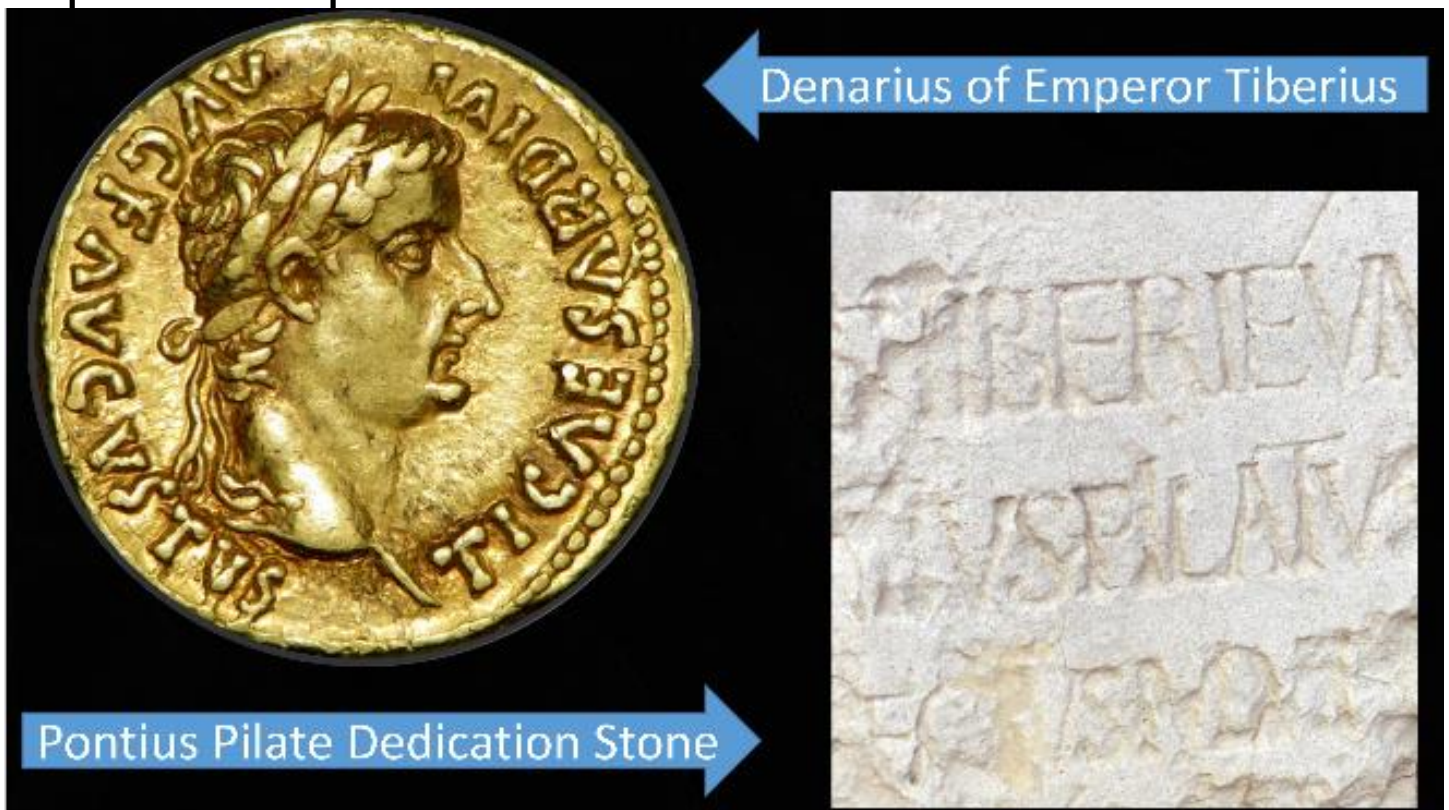
was going to die for the nation; 52and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. 54Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the region near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

This is a fairly lengthy passage, but also fairly easy to digest. Many of the “Jews” opposed to Jesus saw what He did regarding Lazarus, and they believed... at least a lot more than before.

In verse 46 we get another adversative meaning that while many saw what Jesus did favorably, some did not. The more hard-hearted, stiff-necked, opinionated and commensurately arrogant a person is the less likely that they can change their mind even in the face of overwhelming evidence. Those pompous fools ran to tattletale on Jesus and what's crazy is they actually thought that they were the good guys – they thought that they were doing God's work by betraying Jesus, God's Anointed One on earth.

Ironically, that's precisely what they were doing. God will use you. It's up to you whether it will be willingly as a vessel of honor, or unwittingly as an object of wrath. We see this principle clearly in Caiaphas's "prophecy."

In the next verse, "the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council meeting." "A council meeting" is the Greek word συνέδριον (sün-ěd-řē-ōn), which basically means to gather together in a place. We use it as the official title of the Jewish ruling council – the Sanhedrin. The Jewish people were allowed a fair bit of autonomy in governing their everyday affairs and especially their religious affairs, which for them was the single-most important aspect of their culture.



The Romans allowed this autonomy through the Sanhedrin. In Judaism the High Priest was ordained for life. In the first century the Romans picked the High Priest for their own purely political reasons.

The High Priest, still alive then, who had the most senior claim on the office was Annas. To the Jews, Annas was the true High Priest. The Romans had ditched him in favor of other dudes and had eventually landed on Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas who ended up serving 18 years, which was some feat.

By the time it was over Annas and five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas all served as High Priest – a Family dynasty much like the fictional Corleone family, or the historical House of Borgia, and just as evil.

JEWISH SECTS

- Josephus identifies four (4) Jewish sects:
 - Pharisees
 - Sadducees
 - Essenes
 - Zealots

The majority of the true elites were Sadducees. That was one of the four main subgroups within Judaism back then. They were most similar to the reformed progressive Jews of today. The other major subgroups included the Zealots who were similar to the radical Zionists in Israel today, and the Essenes who were isolationists like the Amish, Hutterites, and some Mennonites in America today. Since the Zealots were criminal terrorists and the Essenes were loners the only other subgroup to share power with the Sadducees were the Pharisees. They became pseudo-elite through education. They were similar to the Hassidic or Orthodox Jews today.

Needless to say, the liberal highborn Sadducees and the conservative work your way to the top Pharisees rarely saw eye-to-eye.

The Romans only ever wanted one thing from these occupied lands and that was the uninterrupted flow of taxes. What interfered with that smooth operation was unrest. Rome would not tolerate any hint of unrest. Historically, any tiny bit of leniency at all would result in people taking advantage and creating more unrest elsewhere. So, Rome was brutal beyond belief when it came to keeping order.



The High Priest's job was to keep the peace and that was an incredibly difficult tightrope to walk. The people

had to believe that you were fully devoted to them, to God, and to the Temple, probably in that order. The Romans had to believe that you were their man ensuring that their best interests were your primary objective. Caiaphas evidently was a skilled politician.

The Sanhedrin was in turmoil with everyone chattering away about the problem of Jesus. The primary stated concern was that the people would turn to Him, which implies away from them. That's not only a loss of power and prestige, it's also a legitimate concern about a revolution that Rome would certainly crush. Well, guess what... If Rome had to deploy troops and fight to defeat an insurrection, you can bet that the best thing that the leaders in the Sanhedrin could hope for would be to lose their jobs.

The underlying reason was pure unadulterated jealousy. Later we'll find out that the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate knew full well that the only reason the Sanhedrin handed Jesus over to him was due to their jealousy of Him.

Caiaphas chastised the group into silence rebuking them for their anxiety, confusion, fear, and outrage. He

basically said it was time to maneuver this into a Roman problem.

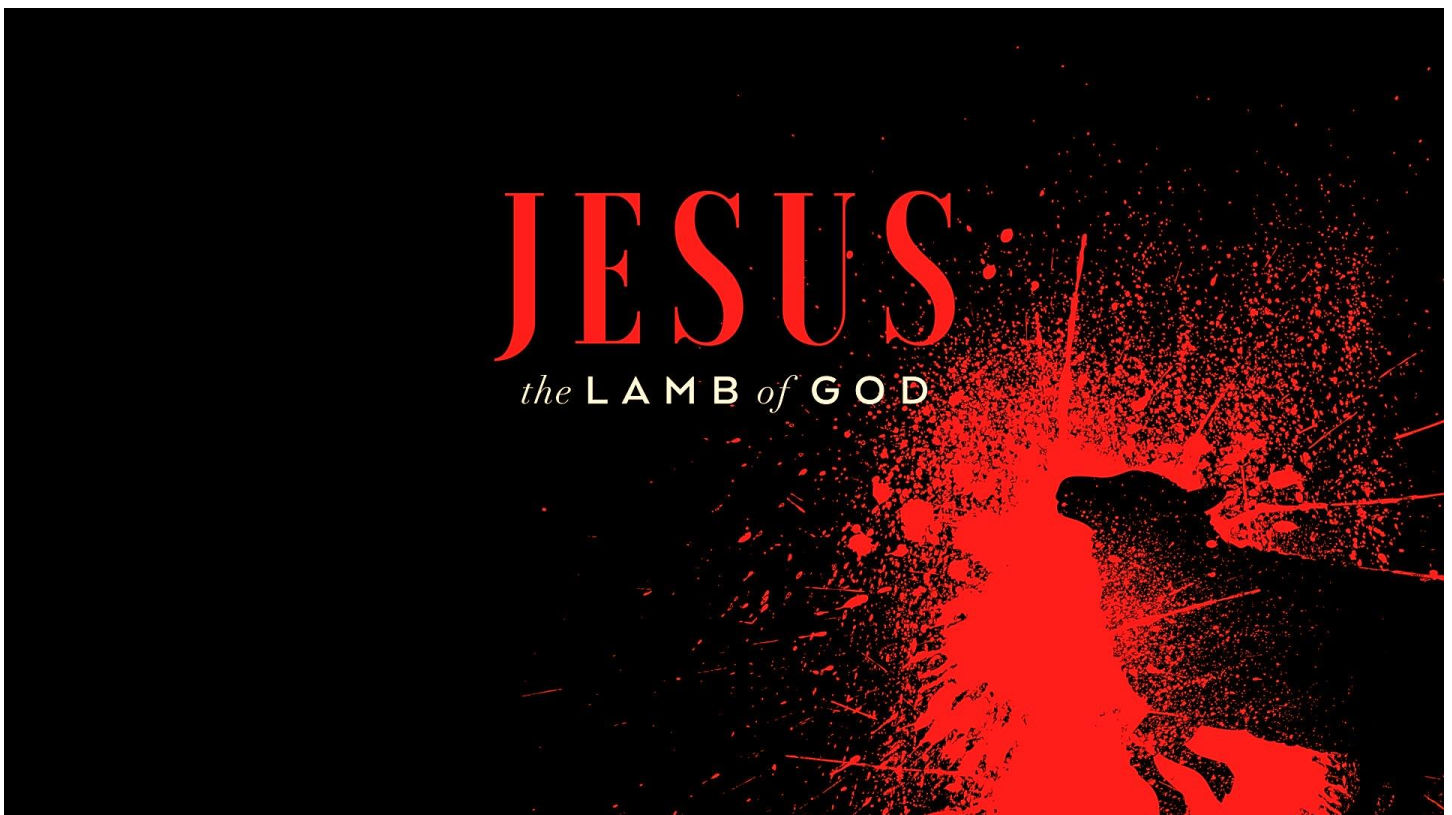
It was a delicate matter and so it would require some finesse and careful plotting to get the Romans to execute Jesus as a threat to the empire without causing the Romans to question their ability to do their job in maintaining a relatively compliant and peaceful populace. To the Romans the Sanhedrin would need to seem proactive in supporting Roman interests. To the people at large, they would need to seem anti-Roman and pro-Jew. Their plan was to play both sides against the middle.

If the Jewish leaders took overt action it could lead to unrest because so many people were beginning to think that Jesus was at least a prophet, if not the actual Messiah. We'll see that Jesus will later teach in the Temple Courts and the Jewish leaders will do nothing and that's because they had a plan that would make them look innocent to the people. It wouldn't quite work out that way, but that was their plan.

Caiaphas, without any conception of the Truth, stated it plainly in a scene dripping with irony. The absurd reality was that, however it came about, Caiaphas was the

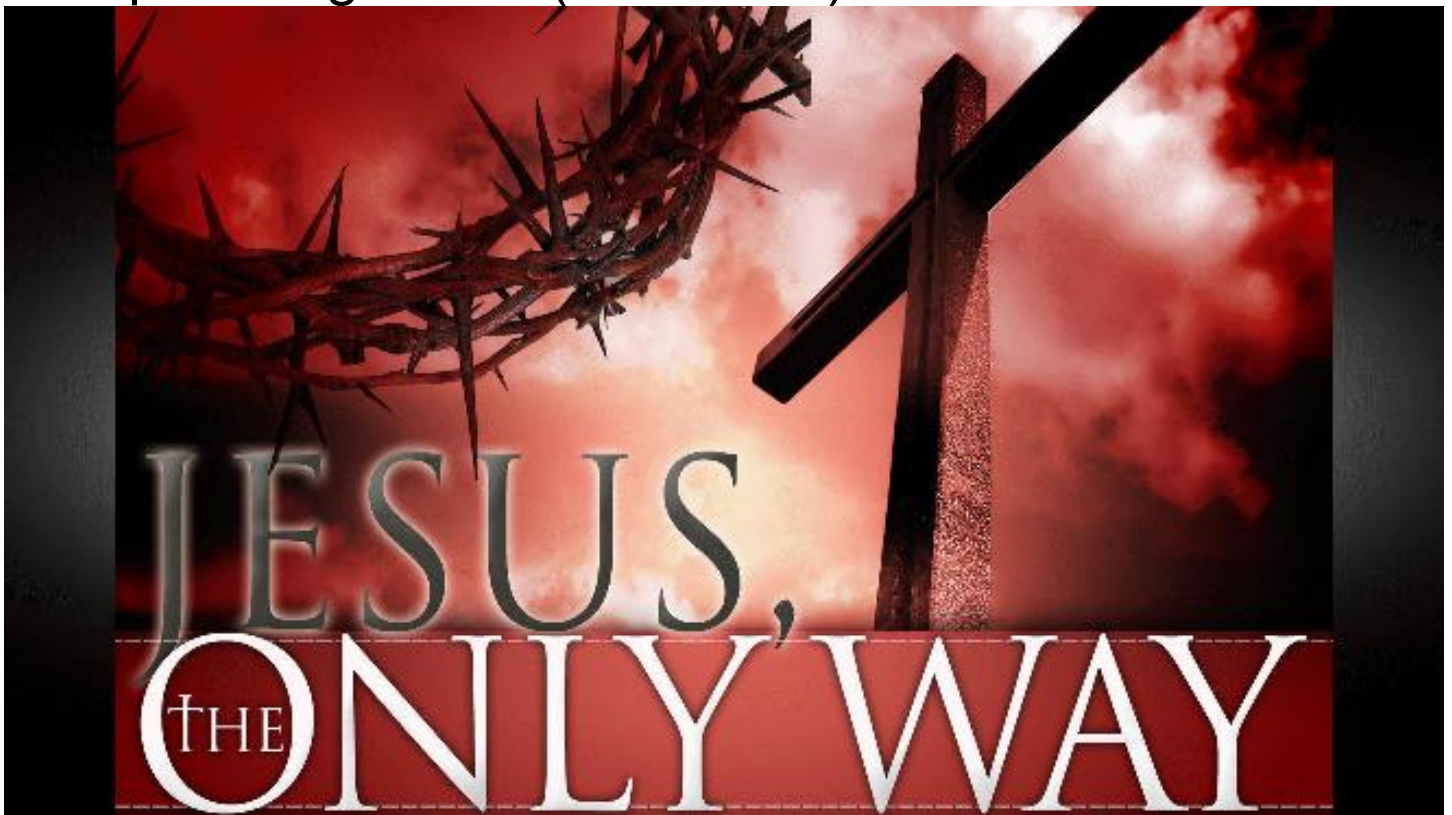
Jewish High Priest and God spoke through him as an object of wrath. “It is in your best interest that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish instead.”

John added a narrator’s note in verses 51&52, confirming that Caiaphas spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that not only would one man, Jesus the Messiah, die for the nation of Israel, but once again, the national scope is expanded to be universal. Jesus would die as “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the whole world.”



No religion in history is as inclusively exclusive as Christianity. It is equally open to all people of all places

and all times who accept Jesus as their one and only Savior. That's inclusive and that's exclusive at the same time. Jesus exists as "the Resurrection and the Life" – there is no other. Jesus exists as "the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Him" (John 14:6).



Acts 4:12 says, concerning Jesus, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved." I Timothy 2:5 declares, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all." Then in Romans 6:23, we have, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of

God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Let’s not leave out Revelation 5:8&9, “When Jesus had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break its seals; for You were slaughtered, and You purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation.” Maybe just one more from Philippians 2:5–11, “Christ Jesus, who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.



For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
Give Him praise and glory!



Men do all kinds of evil things distorting what is good and noble and decent into what is profane and unprincipled and disgraceful. Whether it is the presidency of the United States in our time, or the High Priest of the Jewish Nation in their time. God allows us to mess things up and He will use that vile corruption for His purposes.

Again, you can be a cooperative vessel of honor through whom God works, or you can be an unwitting instrument of wrath through whom God works. God will accomplish His plans one way or another, the question is how you will fit into His plans.

Verse 53 informs us that a new dynamic has taken shape specifically because Jesus raised Lazarus. Giving His friend life would cost Him His own life.

Of course, that was the plan all along.

