

They Planned Together to Kill Him

When Jesus proved that He truly could give life beyond the grave, the leaders of Israel decided together, "we must make this man low, instead of allow Him to be Lord." And that scenario still plays out in our lives today. With the choices we make on a daily basis, is Jesus going to be Lord? Or will I hesitate and make Him low?

IT'S NOT EASY TO PUT CHRIST FIRST.

When it comes to Christ, people tend to hesitate. This text describes for us 6 examples of how people hesitate when it comes to Jesus.

Hesitater #1 - Status Coveter: "I'm afraid of what I might lose." 11:47-48

The chief priests, the Pharisees, and the council are mentioned in verse 47. These people made up the highest ranking positions of leadership in the nation of Israel during the days of Jesus. These people were popular. They were powerful. They were influential, and they had earned a high status in life.

But when Jesus came into this world, He threw a wrench into their system. When Jesus came to this world, He proved that He is worthy of complete trust. Jesus proved that He is worth believing in and living for, but the problem for the Pharisees, the scribes, the teachers of the Law, the chief priests, the Sadducees, and the elders of Israel was this: Believing in Jesus and living for Jesus would make them lose their status.

What these people say here, reveals that they are status coveters. If Jesus takes first place, then I will lose my position, my status, my place of influence, and my people.

For many people in this world, believing in the gospel message of the grace of God, offered through Christ, will damage their position in life. If you are an unbeliever because you're afraid of what other people might think of you, consider what Jesus said: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28)."* Don't be afraid of man. Fear God. If you are an unbeliever because you think that somehow believing in Jesus will cost you your status in life, then consider what else Jesus said: *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? (Matt. 16:26)."* Would you rather have everything this world could offer you? Or would you rather have eternal life in Christ?

The believing status coveter says things like this: "I am afraid to put Jesus first because I am afraid of being made fun of." "I'm afraid that people won't like me." Whatever your hesitation is, consider something God says that is true for all people of all times. *1 Samuel 2:30 "those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."* Would you rather be lightly esteemed by God, or honored by God?

Hesitater #2 - Control Seeker: "I want to have control over my own life" 11:49-50

The leaders of Israel are worried that if the majority of the people start to believe in Jesus, then they will lose their place of leadership. And not only are they worried about losing their place of leadership, they are worried that this will spiral out of control and that the Roman government will shut the nation of Israel down completely, maybe destroying the temple, destroying their leadership structure, and integrating all the Jews into the Roman culture. These guys are so worried that they start thinking irrationally, and they make up worst case scenarios in their head. Even though they appear religious on the outside, they really don't show a confident trust in God at all. They worry. They panic, because they thought they had control, and they thought they needed to take control over the situation. This is what

happens to anyone who doesn't want to put Christ first. They want to control their own life, rather than trust in the one who gave them their life.

Then steps in Caiaphas. He was the high priest that year, meaning he was the highest ranking political official in Israel at the time. Here is what Caiaphas says: We are in charge here, and the best thing we can do here is to let this man Jesus die so that we don't lose our place or our nation. Let's just put an end to this. If he dies, the nation will survive and we will keep our status. But if we let him go on, we will lose it all. So let's kill one man in order to save everyone else.

That is what Caiaphas is thinking. He thinks that he and the other leaders of the nation have control. And we will see soon that they actually did not have any control.

Many people put off believing in Jesus and they put off living for Jesus, because they want control and they think they will have control without Jesus. The truth is, having control over your own life is a myth, and I'll give you 2 reasons why.

#1 - God is the only one in control. That is a consistent theme throughout all of Scripture. God is a sovereign God. God alone possesses complete control. He reigns over all. *Proverbs 16:9 "The heart of man plans his ways, but the LORD establishes his steps."* Man does not have control. God does.

#2 - Those who don't submit to Christ cannot control their sin. The Bible teaches us that those who do not put Christ first cannot control their sin nature. James said *"for every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:7-8)"* Have you ever sinned with your words? Lied? Gossiped? Trashed others? Hurt others? Spoken evil? Jesus said everyone who practices sin is a slave to it (John 8:34).

Seek the Lord in everything you do. Seek Him and ask Him to lead you and to control you for His glory. The control seeker says, I'm in charge, but those who put Christ first say, He is in charge.

Hesitater #3 - Self Servant: "I don't want to serve someone else." **11:51-52**

Many of us have heard this before: "I don't like Christianity, because I don't like the idea that I have to serve a man (Jesus)." Some people think, "I don't want to submit myself to anyone. I don't want to serve anyone. I want to serve me. My wants. My needs." This attitude can show up in unbelievers and believers. Believers just say it differently. They say this. "I don't want to put Christ first, because I don't want Him to send me to Africa." "I don't want to put Christ first, because I don't want to be roped into serving at church."

Now, there is actually so much irony in a person saying he/she does not want to become a servant of God, and here's why: God is a God who uses people to accomplish His purposes. He will use some people in a positive way for His glory. He will use others in a negative way for His glory. So, no matter what you may want, you eventually serve God's purposes one way or the other.

Caiaphas thought he was coming up with a perfect scheme to get rid of Jesus, to save their leadership positions, and to save the nation of Israel. What Caiaphas did not realize though, is that he just became a negative puppet in the eternal plan of the sovereign God. Caiaphas unknowingly prophesied. In the past, God was known to give words to the priests in order to direct the nation of Israel (Numbers 27:21). Prophecy was probably not happening much at all for the high priests in Jesus' day because of how far the nation really was from God, but in this instance, God used the high priest to say something that had a double meaning. To Caiaphas, it meant kill Jesus and we live. To God, it meant, kill Jesus and those who believe in Him will live eternally.

Caiaphas unknowingly prophesied the doctrine of the substitutionary death of Jesus on behalf of sinful men in order to give them life. Jesus was about to die for the nation of Israel. And not only that, but He was about to die so that God could gather believers from all over the world into one family that the Bible calls the Church. He was teaching that but he had no idea what he was saying. Jesus would die in the place of sinners so that sinners could find their place in God's family. This was part of God's predetermined plan, and God used Caiaphas to carry out that plan.

The irony of Caiaphas and the leaders of Israel is amazing. God used them negatively in judgment, because they had so rejected Christ. God used them for His eternal purposes. And God can do the same with anyone today. God can make any person who rejects the grace of God become a puppet in the hand of God to carry out God's eternal plan for His glory. You may think you're getting away with something or you may think you are living life on your own terms, but God is a sovereign God and He can do whatever he chooses, even with those who reject His Son.

For the believer who might be hesitating to put Christ first, consider this: God will accomplish His work and His will with or without you, but it's far more joyful to participate in God's good work than to live the Christian life on the sidelines.

Hesitater #4 - Hostile Antagonist: "I want nothing to do with Jesus." **11:53-54**

Many people want nothing to do with Christ. Some are against him in hatred, others are indifferent. Either way, they don't want to be a part of Christianity in any way.

For the person who wants nothing to do with Christ, Christ will honor that request. In verse 54, Jesus did not walk openly among the Jews. He stayed away from the people who were against Him, and He spent time with the disciples, the ones who did want Him in their life.

If you don't want Christ, He will stay away from you. If you look at the person of Jesus and the work of Jesus and you remain in rejection of Him, He will stay away from you. And you will never know what it's like to have a close, loving, right relationship with Almighty God. You will never know God in this life, and you will eternally be separated from Him after this life. And unfortunately, the Bible is clear that those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Christ will suffer punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might. The Bible teaches us that we are responsible for the choice we make, and we must deal with the consequences.

And let's say that you are a believer, but for some time you have been living as though you don't want Christ in your life. If you don't want a close fellowship with Him, He will stay away, but if you want to experience a close fellowship with Him, just come back. Confess to God where you've gotten off the path of His will, and come back to Him. He can restore fellowship, and you can experience a closeness with Christ like you've never known before.

Hesitater #5 - Outward Performer: "I still think my works matter." **11:55**

There are many people who hesitate to simply believe in Jesus for eternal life because they are confused about grace. Grace is unmerited favor. It is unearned favor. Grace is getting something that you do not deserve and have not worked for. Salvation, according to the Bible, is by grace, but many people hesitate because they think their works still play a role in salvation and eternal life.

John is explaining to us that the events of this narrative are all happening around the time of the Jewish Passover. Jesus would die during the Passover feast, and John wants us to connect the Passover of Israel with Jesus on the cross. The Passover represented what Jesus would do on that cross. Jesus is the ultimate unblemished lamb who would die so that His blood applied to the believer would prevent the believer from having to die.

That is what John is stressing, and the nation of Israel was supposed to remember that first Passover and realize the blood of a lamb spared the nation of Israel while Egypt was struck. It was the blood of the lamb that God looked at. When he saw the blood applied to the house, He spared the house, but if there was no blood, he struck the house.

That is the same way God looks at us today. If he looks at us and sees the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Jesus, applied to us, He spares us, but if He does not see the blood of the lamb, He will strike us.

The question is, how can the blood of Christ be applied to you? Romans 3:21-26 gives us the answer.

The blood of Christ that gives a person life is received and applied by faith. By faith in Jesus Christ, a person is declared righteous by God. And the issue for the Jews was this: Romans 9:32 tells us that the Jews tried to pursue the righteousness of God based on works instead of faith. That is why they stumbled over Christ.

And we see that displayed by the actions of the Jews in verse 55. They went up to purify themselves. They participated in the religious things. They went to the services. They ate the meals. They went through the motions, but they missed salvation and they missed eternal life because they thought it was about their works instead of faith in Jesus.

Some people hesitate to rely solely upon Jesus, because they think their works still matter. What those people don't realize is this: Galatians 2:21 tells us *"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."* If people could earn their salvation by their works, then Christ's death means nothing.

The greatest message you can ever hear in this life is this: eternal life is a gracious gift of God received by faith in Jesus. Faith plus nothing equals salvation. It's only Christ that can make you right with God.

Hesitater #6 - Careless Adherent: "I just don't really care." **11:56-57**

There are people who go to the religious things, but they never really make a personal choice within their own life and mind and heart. They go through the motions. They say the right things and do the right things, but internally, they are indifferent to Christ. They don't really care whether or not they are saved. They may go through baptism or through some type of confirmation class, and everyone around them tells them they are saved, but internally, they haven't actually believed. These people never make a choice, but to not choose to believe in Christ has the same result as unbelief.

These people may have been talking about Jesus. They may have been asking about Jesus. But they were really just looking for entertainment rather than looking to be personally right with God. It seems to me that they just go with the flow, trusting that the Jewish leaders were right without taking an honest personal inventory. The Bible teaches us that being indecisive about Jesus, actually made them side with those who wanted to kill him. Jesus said, "whoever is not with me is against me."

Conclusion: Today we looked at 6 kinds of hesitation that can occur regarding the things of Christ. We looked at the status coveter, the control seeker, the self servant, the hostile antagonist, the outward performer, and finally, the careless adherent.

Maybe one of those describes you in some way. May God help us to no longer hesitate, but rather, to put Christ first, in everything.