

44. Which one are you?

August 7, 2011

Let's pretend that all of us are at the Green Valley Mortuary Chapel for our beloved brother Charlie's funeral service one Saturday morning. You all know that he had a massive heart attack on Tuesday and went to be home with the Lord Jesus.

By now, some of you are wondering, "Who is Charlie? Who died?" Like I said, let's pretend. It is NOT real, OK? It is just my opening illustration. Nobody died from our congregation, yet.

It was an open casket funeral service. While everyone in the chapel was in prayer that is led by me. Without any pre-knowledge from the Lord, I said, "We wish that our brother Charlie is back with us. We miss him very much."

Out of total blue, Charlie's arms started to stretch over his head and he yawned out loud, then he raised himself up half way out of his casket and said to you guys, "What's up?" Everyone of us would have wide eyes and our chins on the floor.

Can you imagine that scene? I might have to do a few more funerals because some might have their own heart attacks. Many people pulled out their camera phones and started to video record Charlie's resuscitation and uploaded them into "YouTube." God resuscitated Charlie after 4 days from his death.

The evening 6 o'clock news on every single TV station across America was airing the video from YouTube over and over. I am sure that there were many interviews with you guys by hundreds of TV, newspaper reporters, especially with our elder Jerry Hamby, since he is a nice guy and a pushover. Of course, interviews with Charlie himself and his wife, let's not forget the funeral director who performed the embalming process on Charlie Wednesday.

Nobody can deny that something incredible happened here. But this miracle of God will divide the people into four groups:

- Some unbelievers who will come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.
- The group of people who hate Jesus Christ will concoct something to protect their interests at all cost.
- The vast majority of people who will just watch as if it is some sort of circus.
- Born-again believers who will have more faith in Jesus Christ.

Let's go back to my story. On the following Monday, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder issued a direct order to FBI to arrest me, because since during my prayer Charlie was resuscitated, in his legal opinion, it was considered that I was practicing medicine without a proper medical license.

Let's see how my fancy story goes with the true event that happened two thousand years ago.

A. MANY BELIEVED

John 11:45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

Now the resuscitation of Lazarus was the seventh and final miracle recorded in the Book of John.

This miracle is what I call a miracle of reprimand because it was done specially in the face of rejection of Israel with the purpose of causing them to see that even if they rejected Jesus He was still who He claimed to be and still able to display that kind power.

As I mentioned in my opening illustration, God's miracles often divide people according to their deepest mindsets. In other words, their true hearts toward God surface to the top.

I believe that these people had genuine salvation with the belief in Jesus Christ. What do I mean when I said, "Belief in Jesus Christ"? Believing that Jesus is the Son of God. He is God in human flesh. He came into the world and died on a cross as our Atoning Sacrifice; that He rose again the third day; that He ascended to the Father; that He can come into your life, forgive your sins and cleanse your life. That is believing in Christ and nothing short of that.

B. JESUS HATERS

John 11:46-53 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." 49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

Nobody ever could deny the miracle of Lazarus' resuscitation. Not even the ones who were the haters of Jesus. In spite of the fact and the truth, they pretty much insist, "Don't confuse us with the facts and the truth; we decided that He's not the Son of God. It doesn't matter if He raised the dead, don't tell me those things. That only confuses our unbelief." These Jesus haters came with unbelief and went away with unbelief.

The Bible teaches us that anyone who wants to know the will of God, God would reveal His truth to those who are open to Him. But if your mind is closed, you are refusing any chance to know the truth. It is the same as you say, "I hate God; I hate Jesus; I hate Him worse than I ever hated Him."

As you all know, after each service, I shake hands with just about everyone who comes to our church. I can almost tell that some of the visitors didn't want to hear what they heard in my sermons. I don't know what they expected from a pastor's sermon – the truth or someone patting their back so that they can continue in their sins.

It was necessary that the Jewish council that was known as Sanhedrin meet and discuss what to do with Jesus. They were not seeking after the truth, but rather they were seeking a reason to murder Jesus to protect their own selfish interest. The way they calculated was that if Jesus gathered too many followers, the Roman authorities would consider it as a insurrection and scatter the people of Israel all over the Roman

Empire. It meant that these Sanhedrin members could no longer be the social elites in the country, but refugees just like any one of the Jewish people.

The high priest, Caiaphas, was a Sadducee, not a Pharisee. The Pharisees who were super duper fundamentalists hated the Sadducees who were political liberals, vice versa. But these two arch enemies could always work together against their common enemy – Jesus.

Jesus had been a thorn in their eyes. He called them just what they were – white-washed tombs, outside all painted white, but inside full of stench and dead men's bones. He constantly irritated them for almost three years. He even threw their merchants out of the temple, not just once, but twice, where they made very healthy profits from poor Jewish pilgrims. In their mind, Jesus had to be eliminated no matter what.

It is the same today. When you pray in public, if you use the name of God, people generally don't mind, even the liberals. But if you use the name of Jesus in your prayer, it is a battle cry. All the Jesus haters come out of the woodwork. No matter what kind of excuse they use, the world is against Jesus Christ, especially right here in America where most of our forefathers were devout Christians and this country had been founded in the Christian core-value.

Caiaphas was really the crummiest kind of person you would meet. He was egotistical, sly, rude, an opportunist, a manipulator, a godless phony priest who was getting what he wanted by hook or by crook. And Annas who was the previous high priest was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. It was a regular Jewish Mafia – keeping their family business flourishing.

This phony priest, Caiaphas declared that Jesus had to die for the nation as if he was some sort of patriot. He pretty much said that it was a crisis, and they had to take care of this situation right away, otherwise the whole country would go down.

Does it sound familiar to you? It sounds very much like the rhetorics we've been hearing lately. They said, "If we don't pass the law that allows us to raise the debt ceiling, the American economy will go down the drain." Guess what? The Congress passed it, and the stock market took a long nose dive.

I've learned one valuable principle from the Lord as a Christian. If someone insists that I must say, "Yes" to whatever he is requesting without a chance for me to pray and hear from the Lord, I tell him, "No, I don't want to do it. Unless I hear from God, the answer is 'No.'" If he says, "You are going to miss out on a golden opportunity," I say, "So be it." If I missed out because I was waiting upon the Lord, either my God will provide me another opportunity or there is a good reason from the Lord why I should not have that opportunity.

Out of that vile degenerate mouth of Caiaphas came the truth of God in v50-52. How could Caiaphas actually speak the truth of God while his puny brain didn't have the faintest idea of what he was saying?

Psalm 2:1-5 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall

... speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion."

In ironic fact, this rejection of Jesus resulted in the political ruin and ultimate destruction of the nation in A.D. 70.

Take courage, my brothers and sisters. No matter what kind of horrible and ungodly situation this country is heading to, our God is still in firm control. He'd never lost it, nor will He. No matter how much Islam terrorists come against Christian missionaries and believers in the Third World; no matter how raunchy the media and entertainment industry have become; No matter how low the decency in America has become, our God is in control.

Does it mean we do nothing and let God handle everything? Yes and no. Yes, we rely on Him for everything, but we do our parts faithfully as He leads us – from praying for one another to supporting one another.

C. THE MULTITUDE

John 11:54-57 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. 55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think--that He will not come to the feast?" 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

Jesus withdrew Himself and His disciples to Ephraim, about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem and there He remained until the Passover. It was not because He was afraid of the Sanhedrins, rather it was not the time yet.

The multitude was gathering in Jerusalem for the passover feast and they were wondering if Jesus would attend the feast even though He had become the top of the "Israel's Most Wanted" by the Sanhedrins.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this teaching, the vast majority of the world population will just watch Jesus and Christianity as if they are some sort of circus.

To these multitudes today, in their seeker-sensitive churches around the world, they just watch Jesus with no commitment to follow, no genuine faith to exercise, no salvation to hold onto, no deep love for God, no desire to serve, just watch. They have the flavor of a religion for their own style, but no personal relationship with Jesus. They don't know what Jesus said about them.

Matthew 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

As we will learn, the multitude in Jerusalem cried out to Jesus, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Then a few days later, they cried out, "Crucify Him." Then they watched Him as Jesus was hanging on the cross. Are you one of those who watch Jesus without any commitment? I hope not. But if you are, I will show you how to become a true follower of Jesus Christ soon.

D. THE BELIEVERS

There is no mention of Martha, Mary and Jesus' disciples, but I am sure that their faith had increased many times with the exception of Judas.

John chapter 11 reveals a stark contrast between the deity of Jesus Christ and the utter depravity of the human heart like no other chapter in the Bible. The rich man in hades had argued with father Abraham in Luke 16:30.

Luke 16:30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

Lazarus came back from the dead, but the Jewish religious rulers wanted to kill Jesus and Lazarus as well. Miracles certainly reveal the power of God, but of themselves they cannot communicate the grace of God.

The stage had been set for the greatest display of the grace of God, during which man would do his worst and God would give His very best.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Today, if you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, affirm your commitment to Him by living for Him.
- 2) If you don't know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, make it happen today, not tomorrow.
- 3) If you are standing outside of Christianity as a spectator, remember this. God wants you to be either in or out. There is nothing between – for Him or against Him.