

John Chapter 11 Second Continued

Verses 45-48: Jesus' teaching and actions often divided the Jews. While some believed, others, apparently with malicious intent, informed the Pharisees of Jesus' action.

The Pharisees had tried to kill Jesus on several occasions, always by the orthodox Jewish method of stoning. The Sadducees were willing to accomplish it through their political union with the Roman power. Thus, prophecy was fulfilled (Psalm 22:1-28).

Of course, the Sadducees were particularly agitated by Lazarus's resurrection, since they did not believe in the resurrection. However, their main concern with Jesus was that He might cause a messianic uprising (verse 48).

Unlike the Pharisees, their interests were political, not theological. Blasphemy or healing on the Sabbath did not particularly disturb them.

John 11:46 "But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done."

This had to be shocking to these Jewish leaders who had not seen, or been able themselves to raise the dead. We see (in verse 45), that they (Jews), had been there to comfort Mary. This was in the last lesson, but needs to be noted.

We do not know if this was mentioned because Mary was closer to Lazarus or not. We do know that Mary had not gone out of the house until Jesus called for her.

John 11:47 "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

Alerted by the Pharisees, a Sanhedrin committee consisting of chief priests (former High Priests and members of High Priestly families), and Pharisees, called the Sanhedrin to session. The Pharisees could not by themselves take any judicial action against Jesus. Though subject to Roman control, the Sanhedrin was the highest judicial body in Israel and exercised judicial, legislative and executive powers at that time. In Jesus' day, the 70 members of the Sanhedrin were dominated by the chief priests and virtually all the priests were Sadducees. The Pharisees constituted an influential minority. While the Pharisees and Sadducees were often in conflict, their mutual hatred of Jesus united them into action.

We see here, that they finally admitted that Jesus really is doing miracles. As we have said many times before in these lessons, they were jealous because they could not perform the miracles Jesus did, and they were afraid they would lose their following to Jesus.

In (verse 48), you can really see their jealousy.

John 11:48 “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”

The Jews were not willing to believe in Jesus as the Son of God even though Lazarus had been raised. They feared that escalating messianic expectations could start a movement against Roman oppression and occupation that would cause the Romans to come and take away all their rights and freedoms.

They did not even recognize the fact that He in doing these fantastic miracles meant that this was their long-awaited Messiah. They were afraid that they would lose their place in the place of worship and among the people.

They liked very much being put up on a pedestal where they did not belong. They enjoyed being thought of as holy men of God. They had a form of belief, but were caught up in the letter of the law and not the spirit. They were afraid the Romans would take their religious rule away.

Caiaphas the High Priest, prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation and would also reach the Gentiles (chapter 10:16).

John 11:49 “And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,”

Caiaphas became High Priest (in 18 A.D.), being appointed by the Roman prefect, Valerius Gratus. His father in law was Annas, who had previously functioned in the same position from (7-14 A.D.), and who exercised great influence over the office even after his tenure. Caiaphas remained in office until (36 A.D.), when along with Pontius Pilate, he was removed by the Romans.

He took a leading part in the trial and condemnation of Jesus. In his court or palace, the chief priests (Sadducees), and Pharisees assembled “and plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him” (see Mat. 26:3-4).

Annas and Caiaphas are mentioned to be high priests at this time. Some think Caiaphas received this position because He was Annas' son-in-law. Many of the Levitical laws were being twisted to fit the occasion. The high priest (Caiaphas), had the last say over the priests. God spoke to the people through the high priest.

John 11:50 “Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”

He only meant that Jesus should be executed in order to spare their own positions and nation from Roman reprisals, but Caiaphas unwittingly used sacrificial, substitutionary language and prophesied the death of Christ for sinners.

First of all, the high priest should be more learned in the Scriptures than the priests. More than that though, God spoke to the people through the breastplate of the high priest. I personally believe that this message came through the high priest, that this was a prophecy from God.

The high priest was to speak what God's message was, and I believe that is what happens here. God is letting them know, through this high priest's message that this Jesus will die for the sin of the world.

John 11:51 “And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;”

Caiaphas did not realize the implications of what he spoke. While he uttered blasphemy against Christ, God parodied his statement into truth.

The responsibility for the wicked meaning of his words belonged to Caiaphas, but God's providence directed the choice of words so as to express the heart of God's glorious plan of salvation (Acts 4:22-28).

He actually was used by God as a prophet because he was the High Priest and originally the High Priest was the means of God's will being revealed.

John 11:52 “And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

This explains fully that this is not the high priest speaking, but rather God speaking through this high priest. In Exodus chapter 28 verse 30, we read of the Urim and Thummim which the high priest wore which kept the people on his heart all the time.

God spoke prophetically to the people through this on the high priest, as well. I believe that is what happened here. This Urim and Thummim on the breast of the high priest caused him to be the mediator between God and man.

Urim and Thummim mean lights and perfections. We see here, a prophecy of Jesus dying for all that they might be saved; saved not just from the Romans but from sin itself.

In context, this had reference to believing Jews of the dispersion who would be gathered together in the Promised Land to share the kingdom of God. In a wider sense, this also anticipated the Gentile mission. As a result of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, both Jew and Gentile have been made into one group, the church.

John 11:53 “Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”

Not only did these others not understand what this high priest had said, but neither did the high priest understand himself.

The phrase “from that day forth”, indicates that their course of action toward Jesus was then fixed. It remained only to accomplish it. Notice that Jesus was not arrested to be tried. He had already been judged guilty of blasphemy. The trial was a mere formality for a sentence already passed.

John 11:54 “Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.”

We see that these Jews really had pronounced sentence on Jesus and would try to get Him killed at the very first opportunity. This city of Ephraim was not a Jewish city, because (verse 54 says), He walked no more among the Jews. I personally believe this city of Ephraim has to do with the Ephraim that got the right hand blessing.

This Ephraim probably refers to the Old Testament city of Ephron. Its modern village name is Et-Taiyibeh, and it is located 4 miles North East of Bethel and about 12 miles from Jerusalem. This location was far enough away for temporary safety until the time of Passover (verse 55).

He was not ready to die, because it was not the appointed time, so He walked among those outside the church who would accept His miracles and believe His message.

John 11:55 “And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.”

It was customary for the Jews from everywhere to come to Jerusalem for Passover. Verse 55 here does not mean a few days after Jesus came out of Jerusalem, but just picks up at a later time, perhaps, months later.

John 11:56 “Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?”

The Jews who filled Jerusalem for Passover were wondering if Jesus would show Himself at this time, and were actively seeking to find Him. The plot of the chief priests and Pharisees was known widely enough to pique their curiosity as to whether Jesus would dare show Himself in Jerusalem.

They were all speculating about whether Jesus would come or not, because they knew the Jewish leaders had planned to take Him, if He came. If He didn't come for Passover, they would use that to say that Jesus did not keep the feasts. Little did they know, that Jesus was the Passover Lamb.

John 11:57 “Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.”

The plotters ensured that the whole city was filled with potential informants.

This notice, that had been given out so that they could take Jesus, was to stir up the people and frighten them into turning Jesus in. It seems that the ordinary people would not turn Jesus in. They believed He was Messiah.

Even those who did not quite believe Him to be Messiah, thought of Him as a very great prophet. They were not about to help these Jewish leaders trap Jesus.

Next lesson, we will see Mary anointing Jesus with the perfume. We will also see Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

John Chapter 11 Second Continued Questions

1. Where did some of the Jews go after seeing Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
2. Who gathered the council?
3. How many men made up a council?
4. What did they finally admit about Jesus in verse 47?
5. How was this council's power limited?
6. What were they afraid would happen, if they left Jesus alone?
7. Who was mentioned as being high priest?
8. Why was Caiaphas probably named a high priest?
9. Who was really speaking through the high priest?
10. What prophecy was given?
11. Who was one man to die for?
12. What is the Urim and Thummim?
13. What do the two words mean?
14. When the high priest had on the Urim and Thummim, what was he between God and man?
15. After this council meeting, what had the council decided to do to Jesus?
16. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the _____."

17. Where did He go?

18. Why was Jesus not ready to die at that moment?

19. When they sought Jesus at Passover time, what question did they ask?

20. Who gave the commandment, if anyone knew where Jesus was, they were to tell?

21. Why did not some of the ordinary people expose Jesus' whereabouts?