

## The Death And Resurrection Of Lazarus

### Part 4

John 11:47-57

### Conspiracy to Kill Jesus

**John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests [mostly Sadducees] and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.**

- The NASB translation “what are we doing?” is a literal translation of the Greek text. The RSV has “what are we to do?” and the NIV has “what are we accomplishing?” The idea appears to be that all their efforts to thwart Jesus’ success had been futile.
  - The word for “council” is the word “sunedrion” [soon eh dree ahn] meaning at times the “Sanhedrin.” (Matt. 5:22; 26:59).
  - The “Sanhedrin” was the supreme court of the Jewish nation.
  - The word may here refer to the whole Sanhedrin.
  - Some believe the meaning of “sunedrion” here is “a council” meaning part of the Sanhedrin rather than the whole Sanhedrin.
  - This view is supported by John 11:49 where Caiaphas “the high priest” is called “a certain one of them.”
  - It is argued that Caiaphas was the president of the Sanhedrin and John 11:49 seems to refer to a smaller council and not the full Sanhedrin.
  - Caiaphas would preside when the whole council met, but he would also likely take the lead if a smaller group met.
1. It is interesting the Sanhedrin believed Jesus was “performing many signs.”
  2. They could not deny His miracles including this one, but they were uncertain what to do about Him.
  3. They refused to accept Jesus and His teachings.

**John 11:48 "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."**

- Some hold to the theory that “our place” in a reference to the temple in Jerusalem. (Jn. 4:20; Acts 6:13; 7:7).
  - Others contend it refers to their positions.
1. They had threaten to excommunicate those who followed Christ. (Jn. 9:22).

Jn. 9:22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone

confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

2. Despite this threat more and more people were following Jesus.

a. The Sanhedrin feared “all men” would “believe in Him.”

b. They may not have meant “all” literally, but were afraid many or most would become disciples of Jesus.

3. The envious Jewish leaders, who loved the limelight and praise of men, could not stand the popularity of Jesus

4. Furthermore, they feared the punishment of the Romans.

a. They may have feared some kind of insurrection, and Rome would punish them for it.

b. They feared the Romans would destroy the temple or remove them from their positions of authority over the Jewish people or both.

c. This could end with even the nation itself being destroyed or severely punished.

d. Their fear was only real if the people forced Jesus to be a political Messiah as they tried on one occasion. (Jn. 6:15).

e. They knew this was not a genuine fear since Jesus never preached revolution and never claimed to be a political Messiah [King]. See John 18:36.

5. Even though they killed Jesus, their fears came true less than 40 years later.

a. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.

b. They lost their positions of authority and many Jews were killed.

### **Caiaphas Gives Advice**

**John 11:49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,**

1. Caiaphas is mentioned several times in this gospel and by Matthew and Luke. (Jn. 18:13, 24,28; Matt. 28:3, 57; Lk. 3:2; Acts 4:6).

2. He was the son-in-law and successor of Annas who was the former high priest and still regarded as the high priest by some of the Jews. (Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13).

Luke 3:2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

John 18:13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

3. Caiaphas was appointed high priest in A.D. 18 and held that position to A.D. 36.

a. The Jewish high priest held his position for life. (Num. 35:25).

Num 35:25 'The congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was

anointed with the holy oil.

- b. The Romans changed that rule and one only held that position as long he had their approval.
4. The words “that year” may be understood to mean that John was saying Caiaphas was the one who held the position of high priest at that time, that is, the time of this plot to kill Jesus.
    - a. “That year” could mean “that fateful year” referring to the year of Jesus’ death.
    - b. John was not ignorant of the fact the high priest normally held his position for life, but the Romans had changed that.
    - c. At that time one held the position of high priest as long as he pleased the Roman emperor.
    - d. “That year” occurs two other times in the gospel of John. (Jn. 11:51; 18:13).

**John 11:50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient [best, profitable] for you that one man die for [in place of, instead of] the people, and that the whole nation not perish."**

1. It is possible Caiaphas genuinely feared the Romans, but this did not excuse his plan to have Jesus killed.
2. Jesus had clearly shown He had been sent from God and He was the Christ, the Son of God.
3. Caiaphas argued it was better for Jesus to die than the nation perish.
4. Politicians are frequently willing to make a sacrifice of others, but frequently this is for their own selfish reasons.
5. Jesus prophesied the Romans would destroy the temple. (Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 21:6, 20).

**Comment:**

1. Some have wondered how John could have known what took place in the meeting of the Sanhedrin or smaller council.
2. There are several strong possibilities.
  - a. The Holy Spirit could have revealed this to him.
  - b. It is possible that Nicodemus and others sympathetic to Jesus made this known to him.
  - c. It should be kept in mind that there are few things that remain a secret, and the gospel of John was written many years after this meeting.

**John 11:51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, John 11:52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.**

- “own initiative” is literally “from himself.” He did not understand all that he was saying.
1. It seems that God was speaking through Caiaphas, but Caiaphas did not realize it.

- a. He made an unconscious prophecy.
  - b. He meant only harm to Jesus by the words he spoke.
2. Caiaphas wanted Jesus to die in place of the nation being destroyed.
  3. He had in mind the physical lives of the Jews, and the lives and authority of the members of the Sanhedrin.
  4. He had no idea that the death of Jesus would save all who would accept Him. (Jn. 3:36; 8:24;11:25).
  5. The vicarious death of Jesus would not be limited to the Jews, but would include Gentiles. (Jn. 10:16; Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19).

John 10:16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock {with} one shepherd."

Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Matt 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,"

6. Without knowing it he was recognizing God was offering salvation to more than the Jews.
7. The reference "to the children of God who are scattered abroad" was not limited to the Diaspora, that is, the Jews living outside of Palestine.
8. Salvation is offered to all who believe. (Jn. 3:16).

### **Sanhedrin Planned To Kill Jesus**

**John 11:53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.**

- "from that day" is referring to the day Lazarus was raised.
  - The death of Jesus would be about one month later.
1. This statement seems to mean from that day they officially planned to kill Him.
  2. This is a decision that had been planned for a long time. (Jn. 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25, 32, 45, 8:40, 59; 10:31; 11:8,16).
    - a. John indicates a major reason they wanted to kill Jesus was the raising of Lazarus.
    - b. They also wanted to kill Jesus because He had healed on the Sabbath day.
    - c. Mark and Luke reveal these were not the only reasons they wanted to kill Jesus. (Mk. 11:18; Lk. 19:47,48).

Mark 11:18 The chief priests and the scribes heard {this,} and {began} seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

Luke 19:47 And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,

Luke 19:48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He

said.

d. Matthew states “envy” was still another reason. (Matt. 27:18).

Matt 27:18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

### **Jesus Ceased To Walk Publicly Among Jews**

**John 11:54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly[openly] among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.**

- The exact location of “Ephraim” is not known.
  - It was probably a small city located in the hill country northeast of Jerusalem.
  - Some believe “Ephraim” is to be identified with the city of Ophrah that was about 15 miles from Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 13:19).
  - Some believe it is the modern “El-Tayibeh,” but this is not certain and is not the opinion of all scholars.
1. Jesus was not afraid of the Jews, but it was not time for Him to die.
  2. He would soon be ready after He observed the Passover with His disciples and gave them some vital teaching.
  3. Jesus stayed in Ephraim, on the edge of the wilderness, for a period of time before the Passover.
  4. Jesus was not afraid to die, but He had things to accomplish at the Passover feast.
  5. He knew this would be His last Passover.

### **Jesus’ Final Passover**

**John 11:55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.**

1. John had mentioned two other Passovers. (Jn. 2:13; 6:4). See notes on these verses in discussion of the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee.
2. It seems the ministry of Christ was about 2 ½ years, but some think it was as much as 3 ½ years.
3. Some went early to the Passover to purify themselves from contact with Gentiles and other ceremonially unclean persons or things.
4. It was important to them to be prepared to participate in the feast

### **Some Believed Jesus Might Skip The Passover**

**John 11:56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"**

1. They were unsure Jesus would come to this Passover.

- a. They planned to kill Jesus and the fact Jesus was not walking publicly [openly] among them indicated Jesus knew about that threat.
  - b. The form of the question in Greek shows they expected an answer of “no.”
2. The question could be worded, “Surely he will not come to the Festival?”
  3. Most believed Jesus would be crazy to come to Jerusalem because of the threat against His life.
  4. They had not grasped Jesus had come into the world to die for mankind, and His death would be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and Jesus’ teaching He had come to die for the sins of mankind.

**Comment:**

1. They also planned to kill Lazarus. (Jn. 12:10, 11).

Jn. 12:10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;

Jn. 12:11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

2. As long as Lazarus lived, he was a walking billboard declaring the Deity of Jesus.
3. The presence of Lazarus posed a real problem for the Jewish leaders especially the Sadducees.
  - a. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the body. (Acts 23:8).

Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

- b. Furthermore, the presence of Lazarus would lead more and more to follow Jesus.
4. There is no record of them killing Lazarus.
  5. There has been speculation as to why the Synoptic writers omitted this spectacular miracle.
    - a. Some believe the Synoptic writers may have omitted this miracle because Lazarus could have been alive at the time they wrote their gospels.
    - b. This is an interesting speculation, but there is no evidence to support this theory.
    - c. We do not know how long Lazarus lived.
    - d. He is mentioned again in John 12, but was never mentioned after that. (Jn. 12:10,11).
    - e. This may seem strange, but many of the great people of faith in the gospels are never mentioned outside the gospel accounts.
    - f. Very few deaths are recorded in the gospels and the epistles.

**John 11:57 Now the chief priests [Sanhedrin] and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.**

1. The Sanhedrin ordered the people to report the location of Jesus.

2. It is not clear if most people knew they wanted to seize and kill Jesus, but this was what they had in mind.
3. The quicker they could apprehend Jesus the quicker they could kill Him and destroy His influence among the people.
4. They had no comprehension that killing Jesus would lead more people to follow Him. (Jn. 12:32-33).

John 12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

John 12:33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

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