

John Chapter Eleven

Read **John 11:1-16** – Jesus Returns to Bethany

v.1 “NOW A CERTAIN *man* WAS SICK, *named* LAZARUS, OF BETHANY, THE TOWN OF MARY AND HER SISTER MARTHA.”

A certain man, a specific person, a person that could be identified and was known. John is the only writer that records the resurrection of Lazarus, possible because he was writing to those outside of Palestine and who would not be familiar with this historical event, perhaps because when the other gospels were written Lazarus was still living and to name him could have put him in danger because the Jews sought to kill him to remove the proof of Jesus power over death.

Bethany was a town on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem. It is characterized here as the town of Mary and Martha which leads to think that they may have fairly prominent people.

v.2 “(IT WAS *that* MARY WHICH ANOINTED THE LORD WITH OINTMENT, AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR, WHOSE BROTHER LAZARUS WAS SICK.)”

There are two occasions where Jesus’ feet are anointed. The first one is recorded by Luke in:

Luke 7:38 “AND, BEHOLD, A WOMAN IN THE CITY, WHICH WAS A SINNER, WHEN SHE KNEW THAT JESUS SAT AT MEAT IN THE PHARISEE’S HOUSE, BROUGHT AN ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT, AND STOOD AT HIS FEET BEHIND *him* WEeping, AND BEGAN TO WASH HIS FEET WITH TEARS, AND DID WIPE *them* WITH THE HAIRS OF HER HEAD, AND KISSED HIS FEET, AND ANOINTED *them* WITH THE OINTMENT.”

The second occasion is recorded by John:

John 12:3 “THEN TOOK MARY A POUND OF OINTMENT OF SPIKENARD, VERY COSTLY, AND ANOINTED THE FEET OF JESUS, AND WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR: AND THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH THE ODOUR OF THE OINTMENT.”

Commentators disagree regarding which occasion John is writing about; Lipscomb holds to the one in John 12, Coffman and Barnes to the one recorded in Luke.

v.3 “THEREFORE HIS SISTERS SENT UNTO HIM, SAYING, LORD, BEHOLD, HE WHOM THOU LOVETH IS SICK.”

As we had noted at the end of chapter 10, Jesus is in the region of Perea, near Bethabara where John the Immerser had taught and baptized.

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Mary, Martha and Lazarus seemed to be special friends of Jesus, that he loves all mankind cannot be denied but this verse and those that follow would seem to indicate that there was a special relationship between Jesus and these three people.

v.4 “WHEN JESUS HEARD *that*, HE SAID, THIS SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH, BUT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT THE SON OF GOD MIGHT BE GLORIFIED THEREBY.”

What does Jesus mean when he says that “THIS SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH” because we know that Lazarus died? He means that physical death would not be the end result. God in his providence has provided an occurrence where Jesus could demonstrate his power over death just as God in his providence had provided an occurrence where Jesus could demonstrate his power over blindness:

John 9:3 “JESUS ANSWERED, NEITHER HATH THIS MAN SINNED, NOR HIS PARENTS: BUT THAT THE WORKS OF GOD SHOULD BE MADE MANIFEST IN HIM.”

v.5 “NOW JESUS LOVED MARTHA, AND HER SISTER AND LAZARUS.”

As we noted above there was a special relationship between the Christ and Mary, Martha and Lazarus. As we should expect, since Jesus was a man as well as being deity, he had special friends just as we have special friends.

v.6 “WHEN HE HAD HEARD THEREFORE THAT HE WAS SICK, HE ABODE TWO MORE DAYS STILL IN THE SAME PLACE WHERE HE WAS.”

One that is very dear to him is sick, yet Jesus waits for two days before traveling to Bethany. Why wouldn't he rush to the bedside of Lazarus? Jesus already knows the ultimate outcome of this entire event. Those who have studied the time line between the arrival of the messenger and the distance that one would need to travel to deliver the message, contend that Lazarus was already dead when the messenger arrived. So Jesus finishes his work at Bethabara before he travels to Bethany. Another possibility is that the delay on the part of Jesus was deliberate to show an even greater power by raising a man from the dead that has been dead for several days.

v.7 “THEN AFTER THAT SAITH HE TO *his* DISCIPLES, LET US GO INTO JUDEA AGAIN.”

v.8 “*His* DISCIPLES SAY UNTO HIM, MASTER, THE JEWS OF LATE SOUGHT TO STONE THEE AND GOEST THOU THITHER AGAIN?”

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We remember that as a result of the confrontation on Solomon's porch of the temple they were definitely ready to stone Jesus:

John 10:31 "THEN THE JEWS TOOK UP STONES TO STONE HIM."

So his disciples, not knowing Lazarus' true condition and knowing that Jesus and perhaps they as well, would be in danger ask why he would want to return to Judea.

v.9 "JESUS ANSWERED, ARE THERE NOT TWELVE HOURS IN THE DAY? IF ANY MAN WALK IN THE DAY, HE STUMBLETH NOT, BECAUSE HE SEETH THE LIGHT OF THIS WORLD."

Jesus here is using an illustration to explain that it is now the proper time for him to return to Judea. Look at:

John 9:4 "I MUST WORK THE WORKS OF HIM THAT SENT ME, WHILE IT IS DAY: THE NIGHT COMETH, WHEN NO MAN CAN WORK."

God's providence has provided an opportunity for him, he must respond to that opportunity at the proper time. Since he knows his purpose, he must go now, "WHILE IT IS DAY" while the time is right to accomplish that purpose.

v.10 "BUT IF A MAN WALK IN THE NIGHT, HE STUMBLETH, BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT IN HIM."

If a man walks in the night, tries to accomplish a purpose after the opportunity that was given him is past he will fail. Just like someone who tries to walk in darkness will stumble because he waited too long to try to travel.

v.11 "THESE THINGS SAID HE: AND AFTER THAT HE SAITH UNTO THEM, OUR FRIEND LAZARUS SLEEPETH; BUT IT GO, THAT I MAY WAKE HIM OUT OF SLEEP."

Now Jesus directs his disciples back to the message that he had received that Lazarus was sick. Lazarus now "SLEEPS" or is dead as sleep is a common symbol of physical death as is illustrated by Stephen when he is stoned to death:

Acts 7:60 "AND HE KNEELED DOWN, AND CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, LORD, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE. AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP."

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Why is that word “sleep” such a comfort to us? We look upon death as a “sleep” because we will wake up again, just as we do each morning on this earth. The major difference is that the “alarm clock” will be the trump of God (**I Corinthians 15:52**).

v.12 “THEN SAID HIS DISCIPLES, LORD, IF HE SLEEP, HE SHALL DO WELL [will recover]”

His disciples don’t understand. If Lazarus is just sleeping, then he’ll be fine, he will recover as John explains in the next verse.

v.13 “HOWBEIT JESUS SPAKE OF HIS DEATH: BUT THEY THOUGHT THAT HE HAD SPOKEN OF TAKING OF REST IN SLEEP.”

v.14 “THEN SAID JESUS UNTO THEM PLAINLY, LAZARUS IS DEAD.”

So Jesus tells them plainly that Lazarus is, in fact, dead. Then he says something under normal circumstances would be very strange:

v.15 “AND I AM GLAD FOR YOUR SAKES THAT I WAS NOT THERE, TO THE INTENT YE MAY BELIEVE; NEVERTHELESS LET US GO UNTO HIM.”

Now Jesus tells them that he is glad that he was not there, why? He was glad because now they will see a greater miracle. To raise one from the dead who has just died can possibly be disputed. But to raise one from the dead who has been dead for four days, whose body is already beginning to decompose is a greater demonstration of God’s power.

v.16 “THEN SAID THOMAS, WHICH IS CALLED DIDYMUS, UNTO HIS FELLOW DISCIPLES, LET US ALSO GO, THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM.”

Thomas, the one who doubted, was apparently one who looked on the dark side, who always saw those things that were against them and didn’t see or accept those things that would be for them. We don’t know the tone of his comment but it would appear that he is being critical or even sarcastic, saying that since Jesus insists upon going into harm’s way, they all might as well go with him.

Thomas is Jesus disciple’s name in Hebrew, Didymus is same name in Greek.

Read **John 11:17-44** – Jesus Raises Lazarus

v.17 “SO WHEN JESUS CAME, HE FOUND THAT HE HAD *lain* IN THE GRAVE FOUR DAYS ALREADY.”

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The fact that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days is significant. From the commentary of James Burton Coffman of Houston, Texas we find this quote:

“According to the rabbinical tradition, the soul of a deceased person hovers around the body for three days in hope of a reunion, but takes its final departure when it notices that the body has entered a state of decomposition.”¹

So we have here a very logical reason for Jesus to wait for four days to pass before arriving to raise Lazarus from the dead. It removed all doubt and would counter those who would deny that such a miracle happened.

v.18 “NOW BETHANY WAS NIGH UNTO JERUSALEM, ABOUT FIFTEEN FURLONGS OFF.”

How far is 15 furlongs? Well, a furlong is 220 yards and there are 1760 yards in a mile, so about 15 furlongs is about 3300 yards or a little less than two miles. As we noted earlier Bethany was on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

v.19 “AND MANY OF THE JEWS CAME TO MARTHA AND MARY TO COMFORT THEM CONCERNING THEIR BROTHER.”

This verse speaks of the prominence of Mary, Martha and Lazarus among the Jews. There were “MANY” that had come to mourn with them. In New Testament times the period of mourning lasted 30 days and the first three days were called the “days of weeping”.²

v.20 “THEN MARTHA, AS SOON AS SHE HEARD THAT JESUS WAS COMING, WENT AND MET HIM: BUT MARY SAT *still* IN THE HOUSE.”

Martha, perhaps the more active of the two sisters, or as suggested by some perhaps the more practical, goes to meet Jesus when she hears that he is coming.

v.21 “THEN SAID MARTHA UNTO JESUS, LORD, IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED.”

Martha expresses no doubt but that Jesus could of healed Lazarus. She says, is you could just have been here we would not have lost our brother.

¹ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), II, p. 138

² David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1939) p.169

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v.22 “BUT I KNOW, THAT EVEN NOW, WHATSOEVER THOU WILT ASK OF GOD, GOD WILL GIVE *it* THEE.”

At the same time, perhaps even hoping that Jesus could still do something, she says that she knows that whatever He asks of his Father, that it will be granted.

v.23 “JESUS SAITH UNTO HER, THY BROTHER SHALL RISE AGAIN.”

Jesus is quick to assure Martha that Lazarus will be raised from the dead but she either doesn't understand or makes this comment for clarification.

v.24 “MARTHA SAITH UNTO HIM, I KNOW THAT HE SHALL RISE AGAIN IN THE RESURRECTION AT THE LAST DAY.”

Jesus had taught his disciples concerning the resurrection:

John 5:28-29 “MARVEL NOT AT THIS: FOR THE HOUR IS COMING, IN THE WHICH ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH; THEY THAT HAVE DONE GOOD, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE; AND THEY THAT HAVE DONE EVIL UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION.”

Martha knew and understood what he had taught.

v.25 “JESUS SAID UNTO HER, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD [die], YET SHALL HE LIVE.”

Jesus is indeed the resurrection and the life because we find it only in Him, no other. And this fact has been sealed to us by an assurance, the assurance that since he was raised from the dead (and as Lazarus was) that we will be as well. The Apostle Peter writes:

I Peter 1:3 “BLESSED *be* THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH ACCORDING TO HIS ABUNDANT MERCY HATH BEGOTTEN US AGAIN UNTO A LIVELY HOPE BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.”

v.26 “AND WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE. BELIEVEST THOU THIS?”

So Jesus here speaks of spiritual life and death. Then he asks Martha if she really believes this.

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v.27 "SHE SAITH UNTO HIM, YEA LORD, I BELIEVE THAT THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, WHICH SHOULD COME INTO THE WORLD."

Martha doesn't completely answer the question that Jesus asked, does she? She confesses that she believes that he is the Son of God, the Messiah promised, but stops short of declaring her belief in the resurrection of the dead. The concept of men never dying, though they believe in Jesus, is apparently beyond her.

v.28 "AND WHEN SHE HAD SO SAID, SHE WENT HER SAY, AND CALLED MARY HER SISTER SECRETLY, SAYING THE MASTER IS COME, AND CALLETH FOR THEE."

As we remember Mary had stayed with those who came to mourn with the family and only Martha had gone to meet Jesus. Now she returns to their home and tells her sister that Jesus "IS COME" and is calling for her to come to him.

Martha calls him "MASTER" or "OUR MASTER" in another translation. This is their term or designation for Christ and quite probably comes from His teaching in:

Matthew 23:8 "BUT BE YE NOT CALLED RABBI FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, *even* CHRIST AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN."

v.29 "AS SOON AS SHE HEARD *that*, SHE AROSE QUICKLY, AND CAME UNTO HIM."

As soon as Mary hears that Jesus is nearby, she leaves the others and goes to him.

v.30 "NOW JESUS WAS NOT YET COME INTO THE TOWN, BUT WAS IN THAT PLACE WHERE MARTHA MET HIM."

So Jesus has not yet arrived in Bethany but is waiting somewhere near enough that both Martha and Mary can reach him in a relatively short time.

v.31 "THE JEWS THEN WHICH WERE WITH HER IN THE HOUSE, AND COMFORTED HER, WHEN THEY SAW MARY, THAT SHE ROSE UP HASTILY AND WENT OUT, FOLLOWED HER, SAYING, SHE GOETH UNTO THE GRAVE TO WEEP THERE."

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Martha had come to Mary “SECRETLY” we’re told in verse 28 but she leaves the house “HASTILY” and those friends who had come to mourn with the family follow her. This indicates that they were truly concerned about her well-being. People handle grief very differently, some are completely devastated; others seem to take whatever life provides in stride, while most are usually somewhat in between. It would appear that Martha is handling the death of Lazarus somewhat better than Mary and looking back at what we know about these two women from prior scripture studies this would be as expected.

v.32 “THEN WHEN MARY WAS COME WHERE JESUS WAS, AND SAW HIM, SHE FELL DOWN AT HIS FEET, SAYING UNTO HIM, LORD, IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER HAD NOT DIED.”

Mary falls down at Jesus feet literally in a posture of worship, honoring him, knowing that he is indeed the Christ. Then she virtually repeats the words of Martha recorded in verse 21. Both women readily accept the fact that Jesus could have healed Lazarus but neither seems to grasp the concept of Jesus being able to restore his physical life.

v.33 “WHEN JESUS THEREFORE SAW HER WEEPING, AND THE JEWS ALSO WEEPING WHICH CAME WITH HER, HE GROANED IN SPIRIT, AND WAS TROUBLED,”

Jesus was touched by their sorrow and he had compassion upon them just as he had on others at various times during his ministry here on earth. The Hebrew writer reminds us:

“FOR WE HAVE NOT AN HIGH PRIEST WHICH CANNOT BE TOUCHED WITH THE FEELING OF OUR INFIRMITIES;...” **Hebrews 4:15**

He was also troubled by the depth of the grief being suffered by Mary and the others Jews that were surrounding her. The scripture says that he “GROANED IN SPIRIT” which indicated that he was very deeply moved as though in pain caused by their grief. He was touched to the very depth of his being.

v.34 “AND SAID, WHERE HAVE YE LAID HIM? THEY SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, COME AND SEE.”

At this point there is nothing else to do but accomplish the purpose for which he came to relieve them of the pain and anguish of their grief. So he asks where Lazarus has been lain to rest.

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v.35 "JESUS WEPT"

The shortest verse in the Bible but yet one loaded with meaning. Jesus is God the Son but is also a man. I find only one other occasion where the Son of God was moved to tears; and that was over the spiritual condition of the city of Jerusalem:

Luke 19:41 "AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT."

We are reminded that it is right for us to be share each others grief just as it is right for us to share each other's joy as well. Paul tells us:

Romans 12:15 "REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT DO WEEP."

v.36 "THEN SAID THE JEWS, BEHOLD HOW HE LOVED HIM."

v.37 "AND SOME OF THEM SAID, COULD NOT THIS MAN WHICH OPENED THE EYES OF THE BLIND, HAVE CAUSED THAT EVEN THIS MAN SHOULD NOT HAVE DIED."

The Jews standing by are now speculating among themselves. There were probably those who did not believe that he was the Son of God but still had seen his miracles and signs. Could Jesus have healed Lazarus if he had been present when he was sick, of course he could. But that was not the purpose of God in this case. There is a much greater miracle about to take place. One that one commentator lists as one of the seven great signs that Jesus wrought during his ministry.

v.38 "JESUS THEREFORE GROANING IN HIMSELF COMETH TO THE GRAVE. IT WAS A CAVE, AND A STONE LAY UPON IT."

This was a typical burial for this region of the world. A cave, either natural or man made, was used or perhaps hewn out of the rock. Places were provided to lay bodies to decompose and then the bones moved to boxes like the one that created such a stir recently. This one was probably very similar to the one in which Jesus was buried:

Matthew 27:60 "AND LAID IT IN HIS OWN NEW TOMB, WHICH HE HAD HEWN OUT IN THE ROCK: AND HE ROLLED A GREAT STONE TO THE DOOR OF THE SEPULCHRE AND DEPARTED."

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v.39 “JESUS SAID, TAKE AWAY THE STONE. MARTHA, THE SISTER OF HIM THAT WAS DEAD, SAITH UNTO THE LORD, BY THIS TIME HE STINKETH: FOR HE HATH BEEN **dead** FOUR DAYS.”

As we saw in Matthew 27, these tombs were sealed with a large stone, Matthew says a “GREAT STONE”. In burials of wealthier people these stones were probably even worked so that they would provide a tight fit over the mouth of the tomb. Martha is applying common sense to a situation that defies common sense. Jesus is about to restore life to a body that has been dead long enough have begun decomposition.

This proves that Jesus was the Christ, there can be no deception, there can be no case of suspended animation (Barnes Commentary). This is not only a true miracle but also one that cannot be refuted in any way.

v.40 “JESUS SAITH UNTO HER, SAID I NOT UNTO THEE, THAT, IF THOU WOULDST BELIEVE, THOU SHOULDEST SEE THE GLORY OF GOD?”

The whole purpose of this event is to the Glory of God. We see back at the beginning of the chapter:

John 11:4 “WHEN JESUS HEARD **that**, HE SAID, THIS SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH, BUT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT THE SON OF GOD MIGHT BE GLORIFIED THEREBY.”

Did God cause Lazarus’ death, I don’t think so because men die and the providence of God is such that he has the capability to know and to use an event such as this to prove without doubt that Jesus is God the Son. Now all who are present are going to see a demonstration of the glory of God.

v.41 “THEN THEY TOOK AWAY THE STONE **from the place** WHERE THE DEAD WAS LAID, AND JESUS LIFTED UP **his** EYES AND SAID, FATHER, I THANK THEE THAT THOU HAST HEARD ME.”

We observe that the first thing that Jesus does is to raise his voice to his Father in thanksgiving. Even though Jesus is equal with God, he is now serving on earth as a man and he honors His Father just as we should. We still see that:

“I AND **my** FATHER ARE ONE.” **John 10:30**

He is also humbly obedient. He knows that God will hear his plead for Lazarus so he thanks him in advance in the presence of a multitude of witnesses. This just adds to the impact of this miracle upon the minds of these people. He reveals his purpose this way:

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v.42 “AND I KNEW THAT THOU HEAREST ME ALWAYS: BUT BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE WHICH STAND BY I SAID *it*, THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME.”

Jesus prayed openly with God. He states very clearly that he is doing so because he wants the people that are present to believe. He prayed only for those things that were pleasing to God and that would bring honor and glory to the Father. Just as the blind man contended in the latter part of:

John 9:31 “...BUT IF ANY MAN BE A WORSHIPPER OF GOD, AND DOETH HIS WILL, HIM HE HEARETH.”

He wanted the people who were witnessing this event to know that he was sent by God, raised the dead by the power of God and spoke only the words of God.

v.43 “AND WHEN HE THUS HAD SPOKEN, HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, LAZARUS, COME FORTH.”

After making sure that they understood the power that was being displayed came from God and from God only, after making sure that he had everyone's attention he calls his friend from the grave. Some folks would even jokingly speculate that if he hadn't called Lazarus by name he would have raised everyone who was buried on that mountain side. That time will come just as Jesus tells his disciples:

John 5:25 “VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, THE HOUR IS COMING, AND NOW IS, WHEN THE DEAD SHALL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD: AND THEY THAT HEAR SHALL LIVE.”

v.44 “AND HE THAT WAS DEAD CAME FORTH, BOUND HAND AND FOOT WITH GRAVECLOTHES: AND HIS FACE WAS BOUND ABOUT WITH A NAPKIN. JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, LOOSE HIM, AND LET HIM GO.”

Lazarus emerges from the cave, possibly much like someone that has just woke up from a good night's sleep. The scripture says that he was bound in grave clothes but he, obviously, can walk. He face was bound with a napkin or a small cloth, the common practice in this society. We see that when Jesus arose:

John 20:7 “AND THE NAPKIN, THAT WAS ABOUT HIS HEAD, NOT LYING WITH THE LINEN CLOTHES, BUT WRAPPED TOGETHER IN A PLACE BY ITSELF.”

Jesus' napkin was neatly folded and laid aside, just like someone that was a bit particular and would think to put things in order before leaving his tomb.

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Read **John 11:45-53** – Response to the Miracle

v.45 “THEN MANY OF THE JEWS WHICH CAME TO MARY, AND HAD SEEN THE THINGS WHICH JESUS DID, BELIEVED ON HIM.”

We would think that everyone that had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus would have believed on Jesus but while many did, the language indicates that some did not. There are none so blind as those who will not see. Those that were at Martha and Mary’s house followed them to the grave, they heard Jesus’ prayer, they saw the man walk out of the burial cave on his own but still some would not see.

v.46 “BUT SOME OF THEM WENT THEIR WAYS TO THE PHARISEES, AND TOLD THEM WHAT THINGS JESUS HAD DONE.”

Some went to discuss what they saw with the Pharisees. Perhaps because they looked to them for religious instruction, perhaps so that they could report Jesus’ actions.

v.47 “THEN GATHERED THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE PHARISEES A COUNCIL, AND SAID, WHAT DO WE? FOR THIS MAN DOETH MANY MIRACLES.”

As we will see shortly this whole situation was and now is rapidly becoming more and more political in nature, at least in the eyes of the Jews. The resurrection of Lazarus from the grave after four days had passed has solidified Jesus support among many of the people. The miracles cannot be denied, especially this last one. The quibbles about him healing on the Sabbath have been brought to nought. The Sanhedrin is called because they think that they have to do something about this man Jesus and they refuse to believe who He really is. Matthew records the makeup of this council in a little more detail:

Matthew 26:3 “THEN ASSEMBLED TOGETHER THE CHIEF PRIESTS, AND THE SCRIBES, AND THE ELDERS OF THE PEOPLE, UNTO THE PALACE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, WHO WAS CALLED CAIAPHAS,”

v.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.”

Now we get to the meat of this whole matter so far as these Jews were concerned. Jesus’ star is rising; the people are flocking to him. If indeed his kingdom was to have been political in nature, ruled by him from Jerusalem any movement in that direction is going to cause two things. The Jewish rulers are going to be out of power and/or the wrath and might of Imperial Rome is going to be brought down upon them.

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Since Jesus had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the people (**Matthew 23:37-38, 24:15**) they feared that this would actually happen. It did but almost forty years later.

Judea was a Roman province, they had a Roman governor and a Roman garrison was manned by Roman troops in the tower of Antonia that overlooked the temple. Though Judea had a measure of independence and were allowed to exercise their own form of government, which was basically a theocracy, a faithful people ruled by God, the Romans were already there, treating them as an occupied country.

v.49 “AND ONE OF THEM, *named* CAIAPHAS, BEING THE HIGH PRIEST THAT SAME YEAR, SAID UNTO THEM, YE KNOW NOTHING AT ALL,”

As we studied in the series “BETWEEN THE TESTAMENT”, Judea had two high priests at this time, Caiaphas and Annas. Caiaphas was the Roman appointed high priest and son-in-law to Annas the high priest, descendent of Aaron, who was entitled to that office by the Mosaic Covenant.

He is also the same man that presided over the trial of Jesus and the one who is listed as “KINDRED OF THE HIGH PRIEST” in **Acts 4:6** who stood in judgment over Peter and John.

v.50 “NOR CONSIDER THAT IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR US, THAT ONE MAN SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE, AND THAT THE WHOLE NATION PERISH NOT.”

First of all he accuses the rest of the council of not thinking, “YE KNOW NOTHING AT ALL”, then he proposes a solution to their dilemma. If this man Jesus is allowed free rein he’s going to bring the wrath of Rome down upon them and their nation is going to be destroyed. It is better that this one man be sacrificed so that their nation could be saved. Again we see a purely political approach and decision to solve their problem. The commentators read contend that Caiaphas does not know that his contention is actually prophetic in nature because Jesus indeed will die for their nation.

v.51 “AND THIS SPAKE HE NOT OF HIMSELF: BUT BEING HIGH PRIEST THAT YEAR, HE PROPHESED THAT JESUS SHOULD DIE FOR THAT NATION”

Thus Caiaphas spoke a prophecy in much the same manner as did Balaam. Balak hired Balaam to speak evil, speak against the nation of Israel but God would not allow him to do so. Therefore Nehemiah writes that when Moab and Ammon came against Israel:

Nehemiah 13:2 “BECAUSE THEY MET NOT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WITH BREAD AND WITH WATER, BUT HIRED BALAAM AGAINST THEM, THAT HE SHOULD CURSE THEM: HOWBEIT OUR GOD TURNED THE CURSE INTO A BLESSING.”

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So through God's direction the curse that they wanted spoken against Israel was turned into a blessing.

v.52 "AND NOT FOR THAT NATION ONLY, BUT THAT ALSO HE SHOULD GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE THE CHILDREN OF GOD THAT WERE SCATTERED ABROAD."

Then, through the direction of the Holy Spirit, John adds what we find in this verse. It is through the words of Isaiah the prophet that one would be spoken of that would "RESTORE THE PRESERVED OF ISRAEL" and also be "A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES":

Isaiah 49:6 "AND HE SAID, IT IS A LIGHT THING THAT THOU SHOULDEST BE MY SERVANT TO RAISE UP THE TRIBES OF JACOB, AND TO RESTORE THE PRESERVED OF ISRAEL: I WILL ALSO GIVE THEE FOR A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES, THAT THOU MAYEST BE MY SALVATION UNTO THE END OF THE EARTH."

The span of the salvation that he would bring is first confirmed by the Apostle Paul and then John again his letters:

Ephesians 2:14:15 "FOR HE IS OUR PEACE, WHO HATH MADE BOTH ONE, AND HATH BROKEN DOWN THE MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION *between us*; HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH THE ENMITY, *even* THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS *contained* IN ORDINANCES; FOR TO MAKE IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN, SO MAKING PEACE;"

I John 2:2 "AND HE IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS: AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR *the sins of* THE WHOLE WORLD."

v.53 "THEN FROM THAT DAY FORTH THEY TOOK COUNSEL TOGETHER FOR TO PUT HIM TO DEATH."

So from that day on they conspired to have Jesus put to death. They believed that it was better to have one man killed, even one as popular and powerful with the people as Jesus, than to have him bring the wrath of Rome down upon them. Again this was a purely political approach, totally carnal in nature and in complete disregard of any spiritual application of Jesus' mission and purpose.

Read **John 11:54-57** – Jesus Leaves Until Passover

v.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."

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So just as Jesus did during an earlier time:

John 7:1 “AFTER THESE THINGS JESUS WALKED IN GALILEE: FOR HE WOULD NOT WALK IN JEWRY, BECAUSE THE JEWS SOUGHT TO KILL HIM.”

Jesus goes to the country, this time to a city called Ephraim that was still within the boundaries of Judea of that day and had been in both Israel and Judea during the period of the divided kingdom:

II Chronicles 13:19 “AND ABIJAH PURSUED AFTER JEROBOAM, AND TOOK CITIES FROM HIM, BETHEL WITH THE TOWNS THEREOF, AND JESHANAH WITH THE TOWNS THEREOF, AND EPHRAIM WITH THE TOWNS THEREOF.”

Ephraim wasn't far from Jerusalem but also during the time between this encounter with the Jews and the Passover to come He returned once again to Perea beyond Jordan.

v.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.”

This verse tells us that it was a custom for people to get themselves away from the city and their normal pursuit and go up to the temple to purify themselves, to prepare themselves mentally and spiritually for the special worship to God that they would be doing.

v.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?”

As people are prone to do, as they filtered back into the city, waiting for the Passover feast to begin they speculate about Jesus and whether He would come to this feast or not. However, under Mosaic Law He is obligated to attend isn't he? Just as we studied earlier it was one of the three feasts that male Jews were mandated by God to attend:

Deuteronomy 16:16 “THREE TIMES IN A YEAR SHALL ALL THY MALES APPEAR BEFORE THE **LORD** THY GOD IN THE PLACE WHICH HE SHALL CHOOSE; IN THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, AND IN THE FEAST OF WEEKS, AND IN THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES: AND THEY SHALL NOT APPEAR BEFORE THE LORD EMPTY.”

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v.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.”

His enemies also know that Jesus would attend the Passover. So now that Caiaphas has convinced the Jews, not that very much convincing was needed, that Jesus must die in order to preserve their political status quo, they put out an edict, a commandment. Any man who sees Jesus, knows where Jesus is, knows where Jesus might be should tell it to them so that they might be able to take him.