

Resolved: Kill Jesus
John 11:45-57
Reading: Colossians 4:7-18

Bethany Baptist Church
April 25, 2021

...pray...

“Why did the Jews have it out for Jesus!?!”

As you read the Gospels, you are inundated by His authoritative teaching, holy life, and His miraculous power...

What’s not to like!?!

But clearly, the Jewish leader of Jesus’ day quickly grew to hate Him!

A careful reading of the Gospels reveal several reasons...

Personal enmity – The Jews *envied* Jesus’ popularity with the multitudes. Even the Roman governor Pilate had that *figured out*.

Theological anger – The Pharisees in particular were *angered* when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. They were *outraged* when He repeatedly claimed to be *equal to God*. “*Before Abraham was, I Am!*” “*I and the Father, We are one.*”

Political fear – Rome ruled Palestine. **Caesar** allowed the Jews a measure of *autonomy* as long as they *kept* order, *paid* tribute, and *controlled* any threat to Rome. But Jesus’ popularity *intersected* Jewish nationalism; if the Galilean sparked a *messianic revolution*, the Romans would *remove* the Jewish council and perhaps *destroy* Jerusalem’s temple. Jesus was a *threat* to an uneasy *political status quo*.

As Passover approaches, the Sanhedrin’s ***political fear*** grows *deeper* and *darker*:

Let’s finish the account of Jesus and Lazarus in John 11:39-57 (45-57).

Jesus *raised* His friend Lazarus from the dead!

This *incredible sign* of Jesus’ power is witnessed by many Jews from Jerusalem.

Many of them *truly believe* that Jesus is Lord. But *some* *slink away* to Pharisees.

The **Sanhedrin** is frustrated, angry, and threatened. They determine to *kill* Him!

This morning's text *documents* the Jews' final resolution to kill Jesus:

- 1. A *split decision* in Bethany (45-46). ...which leads to...**
- 2. A *prophetic plan* in Jerusalem (47-53). ...which creates...**
- 3. The *mounting tension* at Passover (54-57).**

There was a split decision in Bethany (45-46).

1. As Mary and Martha *unbind* Lazarus' grave-clothes, the stunned crowd *divides* in two! Like the Red Sea *parting* under Moses' staff...
 - a. No one moves, but hearts are either *melting in faith* or *hardening in disbelief*.
 - b. It's a scene we've *witnessed* often in John's gospel.
 - i. When Jesus *acts in power* the crowd is *polarized*.
 - ii. *Some* believe...but *many* reject.
 1. **John 7:12** – Jesus *delayed* His arrival at the Feast of Tabernacles to *avoid* the threats of the Jews. John notes: *There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray."*
 2. **John 9:16** – Jesus restored the sight of the blind beggar. But it was *Sabbath!* *Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep Sabbath," But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.*
 3. **John 10:19-21** – The *controversy* over the blind man continues and Jesus' *accuses* the Jewish leaders of being hirelings! *A division occurred among the Jews because of [Jesus'] words. Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" Others were saying, "These are not the saying of one demon possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"*
 - iii. So when Jesus *raised* Lazarus, this crowd *divided* too...

2. John writes (45) *therefore many of the Jews...believed in Him.*

- a. They had come to *console* Mary and her sister in the *sad presence of death...*
- b. ...but were *confronted* by the power of Jesus to *call life* out of the very *grave!*
- !
 - c. John is clear: **witnessing** Jesus *pray* and *call Lazarus forth* (“*Lazarus! Hear! Come out!*”), then **seeing** Lazarus *stumble* out of the opened cave, led *many* to **believe** in Him.
 - d. But **was** their faith real? *Saving faith* is a huge theme in the Gospel of John, and one of his lessons is that **not all** faith is *real, saving* faith.
 - i. Perhaps the clearest statement of *faulty faith* is in **John 2:23-25**.... *Now when [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. → When faith is self-serving, shallow, fake.*
 - ii. But there are *good reasons* to believe *these Jews* (45) **truly believed** in Jesus. **John MacArthur** offers **three** reasons:
 - 1. The *purpose* of raising Lazarus was *God’s glory* (4, 40); *what better glory* that the conversion of sinners?
 - 2. Our author, John, makes clear contrast between *believing* Jews of v.45 & *rest* in v.46.
 - 3. The Jewish (48) leaders viewed the faith of these Jews as *genuine* and therefore *threatening*.
 - iii. I think we must *also* understand that Jesus’ *miracle* had to be combined with Jesus’ *gospel teaching*.
 - 1. They were familiar with His message of *repentance & faith*, and His *imminent death, burial & resurrection*.

- e. *Therefore many of the Jews...believed in Him.*
3. *But some betrayed Him. That's the point of v.46 (read).*
- a. It was *widely known* that the Jews had been *tracking* Jesus since early in His ministry.
- b. So the rest of the *cemetery crowd* walked away from the *miracle* and went straight to the *Pharisees* to tell what they saw.
- i. V.46 - "*all the things that He had done*" included Jesus' prayer, *His command* to take away the stone, *His summons* of the dead man, *Lazarus'* stumbling response, the *orders* to unbind him, and *the firestorm of faith* from *many of the Jews* (45)
- ii. It was reported *straight* to the Pharisees!
- c. So the miracle produced **no faith** in their hearts. If it had (Merrill Tenney), they would have *stayed* by Jesus, instead of *tattling* to His enemies.
4. Friend, there is already a *warning* in our story! Jesus' *teaching* and His *miracles* are more than an opportunity to *believe*. But they are also a *judgment* for those *refuse* Him! Opportunity or judgement!
- a. Jesus (Lk 11) "*He who is not for Me is against Me.*"
- b. The apostle Paul wrote (1 Cor 1) *the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing* ...
- c. Be warned!

Jesus summoned, Lazarus came forth, many believed, but some betrayed!

...which led to...

A prophetic pronouncement in Jerusalem (read 47-53).

1. *Therefore (there for?).* → The *incredible report* coming out of Bethany results in an *emergency meeting* of the Sanhedrin.
 - a. **Sanhedrin.** This Jewish *council* ruled Jewish internal affairs under Roman oversight. It was comprised of *Sadducees, Pharisees, and priests.*
 - i. *Sadducees* (aristocrats; theological liberals who only believed the Pentateuch; didn't believe in angels or miracles; politically shrewd).
 - ii. *Pharisees* (middle class, very pious – legalistic; hated Romans).
 - iii. *Priests.*
 - b. “**What** are we doing? For this man is performing many signs?”
 - i. Their tone is *frustrated* and *contentious*.
 - ii. While *this Man is raising* the dead (etc.) and *raising* a following, we **can't** do *anything* to stop Him!
 - c. **That's** the *threat!* **Read v.48** – *all men will believe in Him!* Consider the context:
 - i. The Romans ruled Palestine but have *allowed* the Sanhedrin a *great deal of power* if they will *keep order* among the Jews.
 - ii. There must be **no** *threat* to the *Emperor* and his *Empire*. Or the Empire will *strike back*...! ☹

iii. But now **two** threats about to *converge*!

1. The **Galilean Jesus** is performing *signs* and attracting *crowds*. Many see Him as *Messiah* – the promised *Davidic King*.
2. The **Passover** is approaching! **Pilgrims** are pouring into Jerusalem.
 - a. By the time the *festival* begins the city of **100K** citizens will swell to over **1million worshipers!**
3. If Jesus' teaching and signs *whip* them into a *nationalistic frenzy*, the Romans will *come in* and take *over!* The Sanhedrin will lose *all its power*.

iv. **That's the threat:** Jesus' growing *popularity* will *call down* the *wrath of Rome*.

1. The Romans will (48) "*come and take away both our place (temple) and our nation.*"
2. Remember, the *temple* had been destroyed and the *people* *been displaced* before (**OT**) – it **mustn't** happen again!

2. But the high priest **Caiaphas** answers their *fear* with a *prophetic plan* (**read vv.49-50**).

- a. Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest from **AD 18-36**. That's the *longest tenure* of any **1st** century high priest, and evidence of his *political savvy*.
- b. He was *arrogant* and *annoyed*. "*You know nothing all.*" History says he was just *that kind of charming* guy!
- c. His plan is *purely political*: we will *hand Jesus over* to the Romans to *die*, and the Romans will *leave the nation alone*.

- d. But *unknown* to Caiaphas, his words are *supernaturally theological*!
 - i. John points out (51) that because he was *high priest*, the **Holy Spirit** *infused* a prophetic meaning into Caiaphas' *declaration* that went *right over* the man's *head* and beyond his *intent*!
 - ii. Jesus *would* die for His people! But it would be the *sin-bearing, sacrificial death* of the *Lamb of God* (John 1; Isa 53) for the *sins of His people*.
 - iii. And **not** *only* for *Jewish people*, but also (52) for the sins of *all God's children* from among the Gentiles.
 - iv. The Spirit placed the *Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement* on the lips of the hostile Jewish high priest.
 - e. But *that* plan was **nowhere** on Caiaphas' radar...!
3. **V.53-** *So from **that day on** they planned together to **kill Him**.*
- a. In the rest of John, the apostle will *dive deep* into Jesus' final days.
 - b. *Plots, silver, rigged trials, political coercion, crucifixion, posted guards – bribed guards.* Everything the Jews did to *kill* Jesus.
 - c. But friend, *it all started **right** here*, in this *emergency meeting* of the Sanhedrin...
 - d. ...with the *fears* of the Pharisees and priests...
 - e. ...and the **political** that becomes *profoundly **theological*** in the **unintended prophecy** of Caiaphas...

*“it is **expedient** for you that **one man die for the people.**”*

There was *mounting tension* in Jerusalem as Passover approached (read 54-57)

1. While Jesus *temporarily withdrew* from the suburbs of Jerusalem, **millions** moved towards it.
 - a. Jesus *knew* what the Council had decided. Perhaps He *heard* from *Sanhedrin insiders* like Joseph of Arimethia, or perhaps He ***just knew*** (God)!
 - i. He took the Twelve to a city called *Ephraim* (OT Ephron ?), near the Judean wilderness, and **10 – 20** miles from Jerusalem.
 - ii. Why? Because Jesus was always in control of His schedule, and His ***time*** had not yet come.
 - iii. Soon he would make a *quick trip* back to *Samaria* and *Galilee*, then *return* from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem* for the Passover.
 - b. But *hundreds of thousands* of Passover pilgrims would be headed up to Jerusalem *ahead* of the festival.
 - i. They needed to be *ceremonially clean* to celebrate Passover.
 - ii. *Even travel* (etc.) could compromise their *ritual purity*.
 - iii. So they arrived in Jerusalem *early* to observe the *cleansing rituals* that could last a week.
2. As they began to *accumulate* in the city, there was a *common theme* on the *streets* and in the *temple*: **Jesus!**
 - a. Would the most *popular* and *pious* rabbi in the land **skip** the Passover...?
3. So in the *streets* and in the *temple* there were a *million heads on a swivel!* Looking for the Galilean and *asking* one another (56) “*What do **you** think; that He will not come to the feast **at all!?!?***”
4. And everyone knew that *chief priests* and *Pharisees* were out to get Him!

5. So there were orders to *report* Him to the authorities. Jesus was at the *top* of Israel's **10 Most Wanted List**!
 - a. Do you remember **v.53**...? The Sanhedrin wanted to *kill* Jesus.
 - b. They wanted to *seize* Him and *kill* Him.

And Passover approaches...

This is a *fascinating and instructive* text. Let's highlight a few important lessons:

1. It assumes that real *faith in Christ* produces *lasting change* in the life of the believer. The **contrast** between vv.45 & 46 tells us that the *believers* in v.45 refused to *flip* on Jesus. The **fear** of the Pharisees in v.48 was driven by the report of the *many Jews* who *believed* because Jesus' raised Lazarus.
2. The prophetic declaration by Caiaphas of the *real purpose* of Jesus' death: to pay *for* our sins, *in* our place. A *substitutionary, sin-paying sacrifice* for God's children from among the *Jews* and among the *Gentiles*. We call this the *Doctrine of Substitutionary Atonement*.
3. And as we've seen often in the Gospel of John, Jesus' *control* over time and events so that He could *fulfill* God's plan precisely. That control is further evidence that Jesus was God's Son. So *nothing* was going to happen until the *hour had come!*
4. But finally, the *warning* that looms behind those two groups of *funeral goers* in vv.45 & 46. Those who *believed* and those who *betrayed*.
 - a. Every *opportunity* to follow Jesus is also a moment of **judgment (2x)**.
 - b. You either say *yes*, or you've *rejected* Him. There is **no middle ground**, **no fence to sit on**, and **no promise of tomorrow**.

And this morning Jesus **still calls**: "*Follow Me!*"

...pray...