

Notes on John 11

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The Resurrection of Lazarus — Chap. 11

This account describes Jesus' great miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead. Only John records this miracle. Although other writers record other events in which Jesus raised the dead, some people wonder why none except John record this great miracle. There may be various reasons that are not recorded.

John 12:9-11 says that, after this miracle, the Jews wanted to kill Lazarus to eliminate the evidence that he had been raised by Jesus. John apparently wrote much later than the other gospel writers. So, some commentators have supposed that perhaps the earlier writers did not record the miracle in order to minimize the threat to Lazarus' life. The more they spread the claim of the miracle, the more likely the Jews would be to want to eliminate the evidence by killing Lazarus. But by the time John wrote, so many years had passed that Lazarus may have been dead or at least the event had happened so long ago that the threat to Lazarus was minimal. But the miracle did need to be recorded, so John went ahead and added it to the list of miracles for which we have eyewitness record.

Another explanation that has been suggested is that John was the only one of the four writers who had witnessed the event first-hand. Perhaps some of the apostles were elsewhere at the time. If Matthew was elsewhere and Peter was also elsewhere (since he is considered to be Mark's main source), maybe they simply left the miracle for John to record, since John was a first-hand witness.

In any case, there is no reason to doubt this miracle or to believe that the other apostles doubted it, since they do record Jesus' resurrection and other events in which Jesus raised the dead. Remember, John records this as an eyewitness. The record needed to be written by an eyewitness, so John records it before his death.

Verses 1,2

1. What town is mentioned in v1, and who lived there? (Thought question: Where was this town located — v18? See MAP.)

Introduction to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha

The account here introduces us to some new characters, who have a prominent role in the life of Jesus. They are two sisters and their brother, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. We are told that they lived in Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem (see v18), across the Mount of Olives to the east (see MAP). During the last part of His ministry before His death, Jesus lodged in Bethany (Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11,12), perhaps in the home of these three.

We are told that, on another occasion, Mary anointed Jesus with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair. This has apparently not yet happened, but John wrote after these events, so he includes a note about it here to help identify the people (see notes on 12:1-11; cf. Luke 7:38). Since there are a number of women named "Mary" in the gospel accounts, John distinguishes this Mary by referring to another event that involved her.

On still another occasion, Jesus taught at their home and rebuked Martha for being so concerned about the meal that she wanted Mary to help with the serving instead of spending time listening to Jesus' teaching (Luke 10:38-42).

Verses 3-5

2. What problem did Lazarus have, and what did his sisters do about it? (Thought question: What other Bible stories involve these people?)
3. When Jesus heard about Lazarus' problem, what did He say about it? (Thought question: What is the significance of v5?)

The sisters inform Jesus about Lazarus' sickness

About this time, the sisters sent a message to Jesus telling Him that Lazarus (spoken of as the one whom Jesus loved – cf. v5) was sick. Perhaps they hoped He would come and heal him. In any case, it must have been a serious illness, and they must have had a quite close relationship with Jesus; otherwise they would not have bothered Him with such a matter in the midst of His preaching work.

But Jesus was quite deliberate about the whole thing. He said the sickness was not to death but for God's glory and for the Son of God to be glorified. (See notes on 9:3, where He said a similar thing about the blind man.) The point is not that Lazarus would not die, for he obviously did so. But his death would not be the final result or main result accomplished by the sickness. Instead, glory to God and Jesus would result. (This is a "not ... but" expression, as described on John 6:27.)

Clearly, Jesus knew Lazarus was going to die and He would raise Him. Yet, He calmly proceeded to let Lazarus die, though this would cause great grief to Himself and to others. No doubt, He had other affairs to take care of; and remember that going back to the vicinity of Jerusalem was dangerous for Him (see vv 7ff). Yet, He could have healed Lazarus without going to see him, as He had the nobleman's son (4:46-54). His entire manner showed that He was deliberately allowing nature to take its course, knowing that He would raise Lazarus and thereby do a great miracle that would give convincing proof of who He was.

Therefore, the purpose of miracles is clearly demonstrated here. If, as some claim, the main purpose of miracles was to relieve human suffering so good people do not have to suffer, why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die? Why not heal him to begin with and avoid all the grief? Clearly higher purposes were involved than relieving suffering. (In fact some miracles actually caused suffering, as the plagues on Egypt, the blindness of Elymas, etc.) The purpose, as we have repeatedly seen, was to give evidence to confirm Jesus' claims to be true (see notes on v15).

Jesus is said to have loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Jesus loved all people, but He had an especially close attachment to some people, even as we all do. This is not wrong, and we are here told that it was true even of Jesus.

Most likely, this statement is included at this point in order to assure us that Jesus did not here act out of indifference or lack of concern for Lazarus and His sisters. He chose to let Lazarus die, even though He could have prevented it and He really did love them. But Jesus did not come to prevent all human suffering. And as already explained, avoiding suffering was not the main point of His miracles. The fact He allows people to suffer does not prove He does not love them. And the fact He does not do miracles today to alleviate all suffering, even among His own people, does not in any way prove a lack of love for us.

Unfortunately, far too much has been made of this simple statement by evil people, who would do anything to ridicule good people. Some people cannot accept the fact that other people are not as evil as they are, so they take perfectly innocent truths and twist them to make it appear that good people are basically evil too. Some people claim that such statements as this prove that Jesus had sexual love for these people, that He had affairs with the sisters and even had sexual attraction for Lazarus.

Such unmitigated nonsense! Such people have no concept of a pure and holy love. To them all love means lust, and they apparently cannot conceive of anyone who loves others without sexual lust. Yet there is not a shred of evidence that Jesus ever had sexual lusts toward women,

let alone had affairs with them or worse yet with men. Sexual relations inside marriage are good and holy, but outside marriage they are sinful (Heb. 13:4), and homosexuality is perversion (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:26,27). Jesus was sinless (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; etc.), therefore He was never guilty of such evil acts.

Yet, the Bible is filled with passages describing love that is greater than sexual love. It is a sincere concern for the wellbeing of others. This love characterized God the Father and the Son (John 3:16; Ephesians 5:2), and ought to characterize all of us for God and for all people, even our enemies (Matt. 22:36-39; 1 Cor. 13; Rom. 13:8-10; Matt. 5:43-48). Parents ought to love their children (Titus 2:4), etc. This is pure and holy love, having nothing whatever to do with sexual lust. It is in this sense that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And it is repulsive that we should even have to answer such foolish, evil, and groundless charges.

Verses 6-8

4. How long did Jesus wait after hearing about Lazarus? When He suggested going to Judea, why did His disciples object? (Thought question: Where have we previously studied this intent of the Jews?)

After waiting two days, Jesus announced the intent to go to Judea.

After hearing about Lazarus' illness, Jesus waited two days (see notes on vv 3,4). He then suggested that He and His disciples go to Judea. This surprised the disciples, since He had left Judea due to the opposition of His enemies there who were determined to kill Him (10:40).

The disciples reminded Him of this and asked why He wanted to go back. Perhaps they thought He had not gone to heal Lazarus because He sought to avoid the danger facing Him in Judea. But Jesus had left Judea, because it was not yet time for Him to die. And He had not gone back to see Lazarus, because the time was not yet right for what He needed and intended to do (see on vv 3,4). Now the time was right, so He was ready to return.

Verses 9,10

5. What illustration did Jesus use in vv 9,10? Explain His point.

Jesus explains that He needed to work while He could.

Jesus answered the disciples in a manner that reminds us of His determination to heal the blind man (9:4). While we have opportunity, we must do the work that we can do. Otherwise, the time will come when we cannot work. This is illustrated by daylight versus darkness. In the day one can walk, travel safely, work, etc., because his activities are lighted by this world's light (the sun). But at night He stumbles, because he does not have light.

Jesus had said that He is the light of the world, but that appears to be a different illustration. His point here seems to be the same as in 9:4, that there was work He needed to do (in this case doing miracles to prove who He was). He knew soon His life would end and He could not work anymore. But meantime He needed to accomplish what He could while He still had the opportunity.

Verses 11-15

6. How did Jesus describe Lazarus' problem in v11, what did He mean, and how did the disciples respond?

7. Where else does the Bible describe death as "sleep"?

8. What good did Jesus say could come from this (v15)?

Jesus explains his intent to wake Lazarus from sleep.

Jesus explained further His reason for going to Judea again: Lazarus was asleep and Jesus was going to waken him. Note that Jesus already knew Lazarus had died, though the message that had been sent Him said only that He was sick. He evidently knew this miraculously.

The disciples misunderstood Him, as they so often did, this time thinking He meant a literal sleep. So they said Lazarus would wake up, so why did they need to go? They evidently did not

want to go, doubtless because of the danger Jesus faced. So, Jesus had to plainly tell them that He meant Lazarus was dead. Note that the result of this is to leave no doubt regarding Jesus' intentions. He knew Lazarus was dead but still intended to go "wake Him up." He intended all along to raise Him from the dead.

Further, He said He was glad He had not been there earlier, because now He could go, do a great miracle, and give them proof as the basis for their faith. Note here the plain statement as to the purpose of the miracle, and why He had not gone to stop Lazarus from dying. This way it made a much more powerful and convincing proof. He had healed many people of sickness. This time He intended to give the ultimate proof of His power even over death.

Many other passages speak of death as sleep (2 Chronicles 14:1; Psalms 13:3; Job 14:12; Daniel 12:2; Acts 7:60; Matt. 27:52; Mark 5:39; 1 Corinthians 15:6,18,20; 1 Thess. 4:13ff; 2 Peter 3:4). The idea of the expression appears to be that the dead person looks like people do when they are asleep. But more important still, to God they are as though they are asleep, because as Jesus said here, God someday will waken them all in the resurrection.

Verse 16

9. What did Thomas say the apostles should do (v16)? What attitude did this reveal? (Thought question:, and how did it differ from what they did when Jesus died?)

Thomas resigns himself to dying with Jesus.

Thomas called Didymus (the twin) spoke to the other disciples that they should all go and die with Jesus. It was clear Jesus was determined to go and they could not stop Him. So, they should remain with Him, and die also if He dies.

Note how this contrasts to their attitudes when He did finally die. The time of that death was drawing near. When it came, they fled. And after the resurrection, Thomas doubted (20:24-29). Yet, here Thomas expressed devotion and courage.

Verses 17-19

10. How long had Lazarus been dead when Jesus arrived, and who was present?

Jesus arrived near Bethany

Bethany, we are told, was close to Jerusalem, about two miles away (see notes on v1). By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (v39 says he had been dead four days). Many people had gathered to comfort Mary and Martha.

John continues giving details that prove beyond reasonable doubt the greatness of the miracle. It was done on a man clearly dead. He had been dead and buried four days before Jesus even arrived on the scene. Friends and acquaintances, who knew Lazarus and the family, had gathered to mourn his death.

The size of the crowd simply made the miracle all the more amazing. Many people were present to witness the miracle. It was not done in private where some people might not know the details. There was no possibility of a hoax or fraud.

Verses 20-22

11. What did Martha say when she met Jesus (vv 20-22)?

Martha goes to meet Jesus

Jesus did not go to the house where Mary and Martha were mourning (v30). It appears that he wanted to go first to the tomb itself. Martha somehow heard Jesus was coming and went to meet Him, while Mary remained at the house. Presumably, Mary did not yet know about Jesus' arrival (see vv 28,29).

Martha's faith was such that she was sure Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' death. This is a great statement of faith; yet great as it is, had Jesus healed Lazarus and prevented his death, that would have been small compared to what Jesus finally did.

Martha further stated she was confident that God would give whatever Jesus asked. It is not clear that she was expecting Jesus to raise Lazarus. She seemed surprised later when Jesus began to act as if He intended to do so (v24,39). Perhaps she was just expressing that she still had faith in Jesus and that her faith was not weakened by her brother's death. Or perhaps she just did not know what to expect. In time of death and great sorrow, people do not always know themselves exactly what they mean or expect.

Verses 23-27

12. What did Jesus tell Martha would happen, and when did she think it would happen (v23,24)?
13. Explain Jesus' statement: "I am the resurrection and the life." (Thought question: In what sense will believers never die?)
14. What confession did Martha make in v27? Who else in John also confessed Jesus?
15. List two passages elsewhere showing confession is required for one to be Jesus' disciple.

Jesus teaches Martha about the resurrection and leads her to confess Him.

Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise again. The context makes it obvious that He meant this would happen miraculously even that day, but He did not specify when it would happen. Martha had believed there would be a resurrection at the last day, so she confirmed that she was confident Lazarus would rise then.

Jesus stated that He is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Him may die, but even if they do die, they will live. This is a grand and Divine claim. No one, who was just a human, could have made it, if he was honest and in his right mind. The very fact Jesus made such claims proves He is Divine or else He is not even a good man. No middle-ground position can be accepted.

The point seems to be that Jesus Himself is the one that has the power to give life and to raise people to life. He had claimed this at length in chap. 5 (see 5:21-29). The "life" in that passage, however, sometimes meant spiritual life and sometimes physical life.

It seems that Jesus is making the same point here. Jesus gave physical life to all living things at the creation (John 1:1-3). He is the firstfruits of the resurrection and will raise all men up at the last day (see also 1 Cor. 15). In that sense, even if one dies (physically), he will live again, as Jesus states here.

But the meaning is also spiritual. Jesus can give us spiritual life by forgiving our sins and reuniting us with God, even in this life (cf. Rom. 6; Col. 2:12f; etc.). In this sense, we need not die at all eternally in the second death, the lake of fire. To prove His power to give life to men, He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Note that Jesus is not here claiming, nor had He ever claimed, that believing in Him would keep people from ever dying physically. He Himself would die, and so would all His followers (Heb. 9:27). The claim is that they would yet live afterward. And if they live because of faith in Him, they can then live eternally. This is again true in the resurrection, that when we receive eternal life we will never die again. It is also true that, when we receive spiritual life from Jesus, we need never die again spiritually (1 Cor. 10:13) and should not return to sin and death (Rom. 6).

It is not clear that Jesus here intended for Martha to understand that He was about to raise Lazarus immediately. But He wanted her to have faith in Him as the one who can give life. So, He asked about her faith, and she confessed that she believed in Him as the Christ, the Son of God who was to come into the world.

This is the "Good Confession" that all true believers must make to be saved. It is made elsewhere by other believers. Those who want forgiveness must have the faith and make the confes-

sion that Martha made here (Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32; 16:15-18; John 1:49; 4:42; 9:35-38; 12:42,43; Acts 8:36-38; 1 Timothy 6:12,13; 1 John 4:15).

We need to imitate Martha's faith. And with the benefit of a full revelation of the gospel, we can believe even what she did not understand. She did not understand that Jesus would raise her brother. We may not understand how or when Jesus gives life, but we must have faith in Him as the giver of life. We must believe that, if we trust Him, He will give us the life we need.

Verses 28-31

16. What did Martha tell Mary, and what did Mary do (vv 28,29)?

17. When the Jews saw Mary leave, what did they think and what did they do? (Thought question: How did this become significant as the event unfolded?)

Martha calls Mary to see Jesus

Martha then went to call Mary, telling her that the Teacher (Jesus) had come and wanted to speak to her. Martha did this "secretly" or quietly. Jesus had not yet come into the village, so Mary immediately went to Him. This confirms that Mary had not previously heard that Jesus had arrived (v20).

Yet, when Mary arose to go to Jesus, the Jews saw it and concluded she was going to the tomb to weep there. So, they decided to follow her. The result of this was that there were many witnesses present when Jesus raised Lazarus.

Verses 32-35

18. What did Mary say when she saw Jesus (v32)?

19. When Mary and the mourners came to Jesus, what did He ask and how did He feel?

20. What emotion did He express? (Thought question: What lessons can we learn about grief at the death of loved ones?)

Jesus meets Mary and mourns.

When Mary met Jesus, she said exactly as Martha had, that, if Jesus had been present, Lazarus would not have died (cf. v21). She said this having fallen at His feet.

Mary and all the people were weeping. This caused Jesus to be troubled in spirit too. He asked where the body had been laid, so they showed Him. There He too wept.

It appears that Jesus had intended from the beginning to raise Lazarus, so one wonders why He wept. The Bible presents death as an enemy, the consequence of sin (1 Corinthians 15:20-26). Perhaps Jesus wept in sympathy with the sisters in their grief. Perhaps He wept in grief for all people who have suffered in time of death and would continue to do so. Perhaps it was the entire consequence of sin and suffering on mankind that caused Him to weep (the word for Jesus' "groaning" often refers to anger – perhaps He felt anger for all the consequences of sin). Perhaps He foresaw that He Himself would soon die in consequence of the sins of man.

In any case, His weeping shows that He truly does have compassion on mankind and it was this compassion that moved Him to come to earth to die for us. Jesus is loving and merciful. He must stand firmly opposed to sin, but this does not mean He is uncaring and harsh with the sinners (cf. Heb. 4:14-16; 2:17f). He sympathizes with our condition, and that is why He wants to help.

We too should learn to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). Such compassion should motivate us to do what we can for others in their need.

Verses 35,37

21. What effect did Jesus' grief have on the people?

The Jews observe Jesus' grief

The Jews observed Jesus' sorrow. Clearly, they knew who He was and what He was reported to have done in the past. Some of them were greatly impressed by the love He had for Lazarus.

Some of them stated that He had opened the eyes of the blind. They therefore reasoned that He could have kept Lazarus from dying.

It is not clear whether this was said sincerely or critically. Perhaps they spoke tongue-in-cheek. If Jesus' could really heal blind people (perhaps they still doubted this), then why did He not heal this one whom He obviously loved?

In any case, they misunderstood Jesus' motivations. He did not do miracles just because He loved people, nor to remove all suffering from people's lives. Had that been His motive, indeed He would have stopped Lazarus from dying. Instead, He let even His dearest loved ones endure the suffering and grief that is the common lot of mankind. Then He used the opportunity to work a far greater miracle than any of them expected. The result was to give great proof for His claims. Yet it shows us that removing all suffering, even from His disciples, was not the purpose of His miracles.

The result of Jesus' conduct was to give greater evidence than even the Jews proposed. Not only had he healed the blind, and not only could He have healed Lazarus, but He removed all doubt about His miraculous power by raising one who had been dead four days.

Verses 38-40

22. Where was Lazarus buried and how was the tomb closed? (Thought question: Who else was buried in a similar fashion?)

23. What did Martha say when Jesus wanted the tomb opened, and how does this help confirm the miracle?

Jesus calls for the tomb to be opened, and Martha questions Him.

The tomb was a cave with a stone lying against it. This was a common burial arrangement, the same type later used for Jesus Himself. In fact, in many ways this resurrection is an illustration or type of Jesus' own resurrection.

Still sorrowing or groaning in Himself, Jesus went to the tomb. There He told the people to remove the stone. His intent was still not obvious. Martha objected or at least questioned Him, pointing out that Lazarus had been dead four days and would by that time have an odor or stench. Perhaps she thought He just wanted to see the body – maybe she was not sure that He knew how long Lazarus had been dead - so she reminded Him of the unpleasant consequences.

But Martha's statement assures us of the length of time since the death. There was no doubt Lazarus was dead. His family and friends had witnessed all that happened and they were convinced he was dead. He had been dead so long decomposition would have begun. John continues to give the details that assure us of the greatness of the miracle.

Nevertheless, Jesus had a purpose in mind, so He reminded Martha that He had told her she would see the glory of God. She needed to continue to have faith that He knew what He was doing and would use the situation in the best way.

Verses 41,42

24. For whose benefit and for what purpose did Jesus say what He said?

Jesus gives thanks to God.

They removed the stone, and Jesus prayed to God before proceeding. Some miracles seem to be more difficult or to require greater trust in God than others. Resurrection from the dead, in particular, seems often to be accompanied by prayer (see Acts 9:40; Matt. 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; 1 Kings 17:17-24).

Jesus' prayer thanked God for hearing Him, even as we should thank Him for hearing our prayers. Jesus did not express doubt but rather confidence that God heard Him (cf. James 1:5ff).

He explained that He had said what He did for the sake of the people. He Himself did not need a miracle to confirm His faith. But His purpose was that the people might believe that God had sent Him. Note once again how the Bible plainly explains the purpose of miracles. Here it is Jesus who clearly states that the miracles were done so people would believe that God had sent

him. His purpose was not primarily to alleviate all suffering but to lead people to believe. That is the purpose of miracles and we need to view them in light of that purpose.

Verses 43-45

25. What did Jesus say to Lazarus, and what happened as a result? (Thought question: Why was Lazarus still in grave clothes, and why did Jesus not remove them Himself?)

26. What effect did the miracle have on the people?

27. Describe the characteristics of miracles that are confirmed by this event.

Lazarus is raised.

Having so prayed, Jesus cried loudly, “Lazarus, come forth!” By this simple command the miracle occurred. Why speak loudly? Surely, the same result could have been accomplished with a whisper. Perhaps it was to make sure that everyone present would know exactly what was happening. All could witness that it was by His power and intent that the miracle occurred. Hence, they would have basis for their faith and could testify to others of the event. Perhaps also it made the event more indelibly impressed on their minds.

In any case, the power was sufficient. Lazarus came forth, still bound in the grave clothes. Jesus commanded the people to remove the grave clothes and release him. The result was that many people believed in Him — i.e., the purpose of miracles was accomplished.

Why did Jesus expect the people to remove the graveclothes? Some have observed He did what would prove His claims, but He expected the people to do for themselves what they could. He gives us evidence on which to base our faith, but He expects us to do what we can in His service. Do not expect Him to do for us what we can and should do ourselves.

Note again that this incredibly great miracle demonstrates what we have repeatedly learned about the characteristics of miracles:

(1) It was unquestionably clear that a real, physical problem existed. This cannot be doubted in this case. Lazarus had been dead four days.

(2) The problem was solved immediately.

(3) The problem was completely solved, clearly and indisputably. There could be no doubt that Lazarus had been dead, and there could be no doubt at the end that he was completely alive again.

(4) The miracle was done on a local person in the presence of many witnesses, so all could know with assurance that nothing could be faked. So convincing was the evidence that even Jesus’ enemies acknowledged the miracle — 11:47.

(5) In short, it was an event clearly impossible by natural means.

(6) The purpose was to confirm the claims of the inspired teacher, demonstrating Him to be from God.

Modern so-called miracle workers claim to be able to do all the miracles that Jesus and His apostles could do, but not one of them can duplicate such as this. Most won’t try.

By this account, described by no other authors, John has confirmed His basic thesis that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We can know it because of His works (John 20:30,31). And remember, John was one of the apostles who accompanied Jesus to see Lazarus’ family, so he spoke here as an eyewitness.

Observe the interesting point that Jesus deliberately postponed going to see Lazarus for the purpose of giving an even greater blessing than just a miraculous healing. We need to learn that God sometimes postpones giving us the blessing we think we need, but in the end He will give what we need. And that might be something even better than what we hoped for!

I also see in this case a rather simple demonstration of the concept of specific authority. Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth.” He named the specific individual who should be raised. Some day he will give a general call to resurrection, and all will hear His voice and come forth (5:28,29). But this command was specific. Though there were many dead people in the world

and many no doubt nearby, yet no one else came forth. When God gives a specific instruction, it is limited in its application. We should not seek to make it broader or narrower than Jesus made it.

Verses 46-48

28. What did the Jewish rulers say when they heard of the event?

29. What lessons can we learn from this admission made by Jesus' enemies?

The Jewish council acknowledges Jesus' miracles yet still opposes Him.

The Pharisees had opposed Jesus' work, and had called in question His healing of the blind man (chap. 9). Their opposition had eventually led to His leaving Jerusalem. Before He came back to raise Lazarus, His disciples had questioned the wisdom of returning. He had nevertheless returned and raised Lazarus.

Here the Pharisees learned about the miracle Jesus had performed, because some of the people who witnessed the miracle told them about it. This caused them to meet in council with the chief priests. They acknowledged how ineffective their opposition to Jesus was. They plainly admitted that Jesus was doing many signs. They were concerned that this would cause people to believe in Him and the Romans would come and take away their place and nation.

The concern seems to be that the people, if they came to believe Jesus was the Messiah, would cause an uprising in an effort to make Jesus king. The Romans would be compelled to crush the uprising, and these leaders feared this would result in the loss of the privileges they then had. Rome was in power, but continued to allow the Jews to have their own nation and their own rulers, including this council. Rebellion could lead to such opposition from Rome that they would lose what position and favor they had. These rulers persisted in misunderstanding Jesus' purposes. Such a violent uprising was never His intent (see chap. 6).

But note what really motivated them: They were concerned with their own position. This is what they do not want to lose. They seem either unaware or else unconcerned that their own statements admitted God was with Jesus. If God was with Him, why should they fear the consequences of what He was doing? Such self-contradictory views must be the result of stubborn, selfish unbelief in God and determination to have their own way. Surely if they had faith they should have known that God would work for the good of those who served Him, and in any case they should not oppose that work. But their main concern was their own position, and that motivated their opposition.

It is amazing and enlightening that Jesus' miracles were admitted by His most hardened enemies. They could not disprove them, though they had tried (chap. 9). Even when they would not accept the consequences of the miracles, yet they plainly admitted the existence of the miracles. "This man does many signs" (NKJV; "many miracles" KJV). This is overwhelming confirmation from John that the miracles did happen. The enemies could not disprove them in Jesus' lifetime. How then could anyone today, 1900+ years later, disprove them?

And note the difference between Jesus' miracles and those of modern so-called miracle workers. We can invariably show that modern "miracles" do not measure up to those of Jesus and are therefore not true miracles. We effectively persist in denying their validity. But the enemies of Jesus could not so disprove His miracles, but had to admit them. If men today could do true miracles, we could not effectively deny them. The difference is that Jesus did undeniably true miracles, whereas what men do today are not true miracles.

And notice also that the enemies effectively acknowledged the purpose of the miracles: they would lead people to believe in Jesus. They obviously feared this, when as the leaders of God's people, they should have welcomed it. But the point is that they recognized the proper purpose of the miracles. This confirms the purpose of miracles. It also confirms how inexcusable their conduct was. They admitted the miracles and knew what they were supposed to prove, yet they still opposed Jesus!

Verses 49-52

30. Who was Caiaphas, and what prediction did he make? How was God using Caiaphas, and what did God mean by what Caiaphas said?

31. **Special Assignment:** List at least 3 other examples of people in the Bible who were raised from the dead (not including Jesus). Give b/c/v for each.

Caiaphas predicts Jesus must die.

The high priest Caiaphas responded with a prophecy. The essence was that one man would die so that the whole nation could avoid perishing. He was an enemy of Jesus and no doubt did not mean the statement in the way God used it. Nevertheless, he was the high priest, and God used his statement as a prediction of Jesus' death.

It appears that what he meant was that they should try to kill Jesus in order to prevent the nation being destroyed by the Romans. This was the conclusion the council reached (v53). It was (in their view) better to kill one man than to have the whole nation destroyed.

Nevertheless, what God really meant was that the death of Jesus would lead to the spiritual salvation of the Jews and also those who were scattered abroad. This could mean the scattered Jews or perhaps people of other nations (cf. 10:16). Both would be true.

Note that God can use even false teachers to prophesy and speak His will. This man was the high priest, so God used him. Generally, however, God speaks through those who are His true servants.

Verses 53,54

32. What did the Jewish leaders determine to do to Jesus and what did Jesus do as a result?

The council determines to kill Jesus.

These rulers then began to plot to kill Jesus. They had attempted this before, but from this point on it became their settled intent. See notes on 5:16-18; 7:32,45; 8:37,59; 10:39.

To avoid this, Jesus no longer openly associated and taught among them. He went with His disciples to a city called Ephraim in the wilderness (see MAP north of Jerusalem). This time of retirement did not last long. Jesus was apparently waiting till the proper time for the final confrontation that would lead to His death. He must die as the Passover lamb. When the time came, we will see in the next chapter that He boldly entered Jerusalem and allowed the Jewish leaders to carry out their plans.

Verses 55-57

33. What feast was approaching, what did the people wonder, and what command had the rulers given?

The people discuss whether or not Jesus would attend the Passover.

The Passover feast was approaching; so, many Jews went to Jerusalem to attend the feast as required by the law. The Passover was the annual celebration of the time God spared the first-born Israelites when He slew the firstborn Egyptians (Ex. 12,13).

This particular Passover was the one at which Jesus would be killed as our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). The time of His death was drawing near, as the high priest had predicted.

The people wondered whether He would even come to the feast, considering the opposition of the rulers. But the rulers had commanded that anyone who knew His whereabouts should report to them so they could seize Him.

The scene was set for the final confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. He had repeatedly proved He was from God. He had even done one of His most amazing miracles in their very "backyard." They were compelled to deal with Him, and had determined their only course of action was to kill Him. Would He now stay away to avoid conflict? Or would He attend the feast and continue the confrontation, knowing His life was at stake? His followers, of course,

hoped He would lead a violent uprising, even if necessary. We will see how the story unfolds in the next chapter.

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