

Exegetical Notes, John 11:45-57 “He Prophesied”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

John 11:45-57

Verses 45-47a

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

- Once again, even after having witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead (see John 11:1-44) people were divided about Jesus. Some thought that he was Israel’s Messiah because of what they saw. Others went immediately to the chief priests and reported what Jesus had done.
- The chief priests and the Pharisees were concerned by the reports these people brought them. So they called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the council which guided Israel’s life as a nation and as God’s people. It was composed of the 70 most influential men in the kingdom.

Verses 47b-48

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs.⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

- The great concern at the meeting of the Sanhedrin was the “Jesus problem.” Though they had challenged him in every way in order to show the people that Jesus could not be Israel’s Messiah, more and more people were turning to Jesus. Their attempts to discredit him were not working.
- The major problem was the miracles and signs he did. Jesus’ miracles were impressive. If he continued to do what he was doing, everyone would come to believe in him. This would threaten their control of the nation. The unrest would cause the Romans to crack down on Judea and they would lose their power, position, and wealth.

Verses 49-52

Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all!⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

- Caiaphas was the ruling member of the High Priestly family that year. The office was purchased from Rome by his family. The office of High Priest, the most powerful religious office in Israel, was passed between he and his father-in-law, Annas. This was one of the years when Caiaphas held the title officially.
- He told the Sanhedrin that they were giving up in foolish desperation. They only needed to arrange for Jesus’ death to stop Jesus’ influence from spreading over the people of Israel. He said that it made sense that “one man should die to save the nation.”
- John contends that Caiaphas did not make this remark on his own but as prophecy under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This was God’s plan; that one man, Jesus, should die to save not only the people of Israel but all who would believe in him. Though Caiaphas spoke the plan of God under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he did not know that he had prophesied. John understood, after the fact, that the High Priest had been used to declare the plan and purpose of God. Through Jesus’ death, God would save the believers in Israel, the believers from all other parts of the world, and bring all believers together as one people.

Verses 53-54

So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

- The High Priest’s words made sense to most of the members of the Sanhedrin. To protect the nation, and to preserve their position, it was best that Jesus die. So they began to make plans to allow that event.
- Resultantly, Jesus’ mobility was curtailed. He withdrew to a quiet place, a village called Ephraim about which we know nothing today.

Verses 55-57

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the festival at all?” ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

- As the Passover grew near that year, people were expecting Jesus to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. There was a sense of expectancy in the air. Many people were hopeful that Jesus would come to the feast so they could hear him teach and, perhaps, see him do some miraculous sign. But the religious authorities were watching for him in order to arrest him.

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