



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 11:47-57 Commentary King James Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 11:47) Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

After some of those who heard the words of Jesus and saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead rushed from Bethany to Jerusalem to report His latest sign to the Pharisees, the chief priests and Pharisees called a council meeting (a meeting of the Sanhedrin) to deal with Jesus. No one denied the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, did good works, and performed signs that indicated He came from God. Unable to deny the fact Jesus did many good deeds that only God could do, they objected when Jesus did not comply with their traditions and interpretations of the Law of God, for He sometimes healed on the Sabbath. Because of the signs Jesus performed and because He would not obey them, the religious leaders called an assembly to decide what they should do with Jesus.

(John 11:48) 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.

Because of Jesus' many signs that revealed the compassion of God, increasing numbers of Jews, Samaritans, and others began believing in Him. This fact led the religious authorities to believe that if Jesus became widely acknowledged as the promised Messiah then a revolution would result, and the Romans would destroy *their* temple, *their* Jerusalem, and *their* nation (Judea). As we consider their reasoning, we need to remember that the conflict between Jesus and these leaders ran far deeper than a political and cultural conflict or a concern only for their loss of power over others and their wealth if Jesus were proclaimed God's Messiah. Consider what Jesus told these religious leaders earlier when He told them what motivated their unbelief and hatred of Him. In John 8:19, Jesus told them that they rejected Him because, "You know neither me nor my Father." In John 8:21, Jesus warned them, "You will die in your sin." In John 8:23, He said, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." In John 8:44, Jesus told them, "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." And in John 8:47, Jesus summarized, "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God." What Jesus revealed in these verses should be deeply considered by every generation in every society and nation.

(John 11:49) And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Under Roman rule, the Romans appointed the high priest, so every high priest had many self-centered incentives to cooperate with the Romans rather than risk their life or livelihood. After the Romans appointed a new high priest sometimes yearly, it was possible to retain the title "high priest," but without the same power. Caiaphas impatiently insulted the Sanhedrin when he ended their discussion with the words, "You know nothing at all!"

(John 11:50) Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

Perhaps thinking only politically and selfishly from his point of view, Caiaphas proclaimed the devil's desires while also making a divinely inspired prophecy about Jesus. Caiaphas may have selfishly thought that it was better for Jesus to die than for him to die, for he would lose everything he valued if the Romans destroyed Judea. He wanted the Sanhedrin to realize that if they did not kill Jesus then all of them could lose everything too. He expressed a complete lack of the knowledge of God, a total disregard of the Scriptures' teachings, and no concern for the people of God who heard Jesus gladly.

(John 11:51) And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

Just as God prophesied through a donkey to Balaam (see Numbers 22), so God prophesied through a wicked high priest, Caiaphas. The high priest did not prophesy because He spoke for God as one of God's people, for Jesus had already said of the religious authorities in John 8:47, "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God." Caiaphas did not hear, but rejected, the words and signs of Jesus because he was not from God. Caiaphas spoke on one level of meaning as a person of *this world* and the devil's child. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John spiritually interpreted the high priest's words as a prophecy about Jesus' death for the sins of the nation; that is, that everyone who believed in Jesus might not die in their sin but receive the forgiveness of God. At the hands of sinners, Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins and enabled God (His Father and He) to lovingly, justly, and mercifully forgive sins and grant the gift of eternal life to those who believed in Jesus.

(John 11:52) And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Jesus died for the sins of those who would repent of their sins and believe in Him. Some of the religious leaders and priests would eventually do so. Before Jesus died, Nicodemus believed in Him, for he helped with Jesus'

burial. In Acts 6:7, we read, “The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” Then immediately, in Acts 6:8, we read of the martyrdom of Stephen (see Acts 6:8-15). In order for Jesus to gather into one the dispersed children of God, Jesus would need to rise from the dead, which He did on the third day after His death. The “one” would be “the Church,” the believers in Jesus that the disciples gathered as they preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. The dispersed children of God would include Jews living outside Judea, Samaritans, Romans, Gentiles, and the children of God in every tribe, tongue, and nation between the time of Jesus’ resurrection until He comes again on the last day.

(John 11:53) Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

Prior to His resurrection from the dead, His greatest sign, raising Lazarus from the dead was the last great sign Jesus gave that He came from His Father into the world. Jesus knew that by raising Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders would seek to kill Him and later want to kill Lazarus. The chief priests revealed how evil they had become when we read ahead in John 12:9-11, “When the great crowd of the Jews learned that He was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.” The chief priests illustrate how the more people harden their hearts against God and suppress the truths they know, the more evil they can become until they begin doing what was previously unthinkable to them.

(John 11:54) 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.

We know from the gospels how slow the disciples were to understand and fully believe in Jesus. After Jesus rose from the dead, in Luke 24:25-26, Jesus said to two of them on the road to Emmaus, “Oh, how foolish you are,

and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Jesus no longer walked about openly so He could teach His disciples as much as possible with the time He had left rather than immerse himself in endless controversies with the religious leaders who would never believe in Him. In fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus would not die until the Passover. But rather than tempt His Father to save Him by needlessly putting himself in harms' way before then, Jesus took the opportunity to keep teaching His disciples the Scriptures and about himself. They all knew they needed His teaching, but the disciples did not yet know how much they would need it!

(John 11:55) And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

Prior to the Passover Feast, the Jews (Jewish males were required to attend the Passover Festival) went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices for their sins. Their sacrifices were intended to purify them from ritual defilements. To purify themselves, they would go to the temple, pray, confess their sins, and offer sacrifices, but they would never receive the assurance of forgiveness of sins until after Jesus died and rose again and they heard and received the good news about Jesus that His disciples preached as the Holy Spirit enabled them. Obviously, the religious leaders who plotted to kill Jesus were not only ritually defiled but morally and spiritually defiled in every way. None of their ritual performances would purify them. They did not heed their prophets' calls to obey God and the Scriptures; for example, in Micah 6:8, we read, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." They rejected the teachings of Jesus about God, and refused to do what His Father desired, as we read in Hosea 6:6, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." By their words and actions, we know they totally lacked steadfast love and the knowledge of God.

(John 11:56) 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 at the Feast of Booths, before the Passover Festival the crowds were looking for Jesus and discussing whether He would come to the festival or not. Some argued that He would not come to the festival because they knew the chief priests and Pharisees were looking for Him to arrest Him. They could not believe that Jesus would risk His life by coming to the feast.

(John 11:57) 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.

Having decided to arrest and kill Jesus, as the Passover celebration neared, the chief priests and the Pharisees ordered the people to tell them if they knew where Jesus was. When Judas betrayed Jesus and led those the chief priests sent to arrest Him, he did exactly what they ordered, for he knew where Jesus often went to pray with His disciples.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did the council know Jesus was doing and what did they know about the result among many in the crowds who heard and saw Him.
2. What did the council think would happen if everyone eventually believed in Jesus as the Messiah?
3. What did Caiaphas, the high priest, advise the council? Why did he advise this?
4. Why did the Jews go to Jerusalem before the Passover? Did they demonstrate the effectiveness of their preparations later? Why or why not?
5. What were the orders of the Pharisees and the chief priests?

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