

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK TWENTY-TWO: THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS

READING

45 Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. 46 But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. “What are we going to do?” they asked each other. “This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. 48 If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.” 49 Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about! 50 You don’t realize that it’s better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.” 51 He did not say this on his own; as high priest at that time he was led to prophesy that Jesus would die for the entire nation. 52 And not only for that nation, but to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world. 53 So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death. John 11 (NLT)

TEACHING

Today’s text happened right after Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave. It’s interesting to notice the different responses to that amazing miracle. Many people believed, but others used this wonderful event as an opportunity to stir up the Pharisees (the Jewish religious leaders). The Pharisees were afraid that the Jewish people would believe in Jesus and loudly and proudly declare Jesus to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews. The Jewish people were under the rule of the Romans and the Pharisees assumed that this sort of response would provoke the Romans to come in and destroy the Jewish people and their temple. The Romans were known for their fierceness in battle and they would not tolerate a defeated people claiming to have their own king.

Caiaphas, the high priest and main religious leader of the Jewish people, basically agrees with the Pharisees. He affirms that it is better for Jesus to die than for the entire nation to be destroyed. John, the author, points out that Caiaphas didn’t realize he was actually prophesying about Jesus’ death. Jesus *would* die instead of the Jewish people, but not in the way Caiaphas thought. Jesus died in place of, and for, the entire nation – and for the entire world! Jesus came to lay down his life and to pay the price for our sins with his sacrificial death. Because Jesus died in our place, we can experience life both now and forever. At this point, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death. They thought they were in control, but God was still in control and using even their evil plans to accomplish his good purpose.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Are you good at making plans? Why or why not?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, how did people respond to Lazarus being raised from the dead?
- Caiaphas and the Pharisees thought they were in control of what happened to Jesus, but who was really in control?

CHILDREN:

- What were the different ways people responded to Lazarus being raised from the dead?
- Why didn't the Pharisees want people to believe in Jesus?
- How did God use the plans of the religious leaders for our good?

TEENAGERS:

- Why did the Pharisees react the way they did to the news of this miracle?
- Who was Caiaphas and what did he say?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus died in your place?

ADULTS:

- How can people respond so differently to witnessing the same miracle?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus died in your place?

PRAYER

God, thank you for sending Jesus to die in my place. Jesus, thank you for being willing to lay your life down so that I could have true life both now and forever. Help me to tell others about your love. Thank you that you are in control of every circumstance and at work in every challenge. Help me to trust your power and your plan even when it seems like evil is in control. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Who was Caiaphas?

The ESV study notes for John 18:24 offer this insight: "Caiaphas managed to retain control of the high priesthood for nearly 18 years—longer than anyone else in the first century. He was certainly the high priest during Jesus' ministry, although he also consulted frequently with his father-in-law Annas (John 18:13; cf. Luke 3:2)." In his commentary on the gospel of John, D.A. Carson reveals that Caiaphas was appointed high priest by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus in AD 18 and that he "remained in office until AD 36, when he and Pontius Pilate were both sacked at the same time."