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The Sanhēdrin was the ruling body of Israel and had wide-ranging authority in civil and criminal as well as religious matters. “It was the highest judicial body in Israel and exercised judicial, legislative, and executive powers at that time.” 70 members. These 2 parties were absolutely opposed to each other in every way. “What shall we do with this threat to us?” Frustrated! (**Mk. 14:1, Lk. 22:2**). **“What are we doing? This man is performing many signs!”**

They were outraged because they understood exactly who He was claiming to be (**5:18, 8:59, 10:31**). “If we let Him go on like this, everybody will soon believe and accept Jesus as political Messiah. Soon Jerusalem would be packed with huge crowds looking for the Jewish Messiah. They won’t follow us anymore and Rome will not tolerate insurrection.” What were they afraid of? The issue was control. The writer John says they feared the Romans. They were afraid of losing “their place”, control of the temple and their nation. Notice they didn’t ask whether Jesus was right/wrong or if they should believe. “Religious questionings are quickly silenced by political fears.”

Our place (the temple, symbolic of their authority, power, and privilege) and **our nation** (the Jewish people). They wanted control, power, and prestige.

Many signs: One sign had occurred at the end of Jesus’ first year of ministry—a man without strength for 38 years was healed (**5:1-18**). A second had occurred recently—a man who had been born blind and then was given his sight by Jesus on the Sabbath (**9:1-14**). A third sign had just happened—a man was raised from the dead; he was brought back to life! “They can’t deny the fact that the deeds of Jesus have the character of ‘signs’.”

:49-50 **But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, :50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”** “Joseph Caiaphas had been appointed high priest in A.D. 18 by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus. Caiaphas would continue in office until

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he was deposed in A.D. 36.” He was the son-in-law of Annas, who had served as high priest from A.D. 6-15. Theoretically, a high priest served for life, thus Jesus after arrested was first sent to Annas (**18:13**). But since the office was political, the Rome leader could appoint and remove any time he wanted.

You know (perceive) nothing at all! This is always typical of those who deny the invisible realities. They think they know, but they don’t. Caiaphas was frustrated by the indecision of the rest of the Sanhēdrin. **It is expedient for you that one man die for the people.** “Caiaphas was concerned with political expediency, not with guilt and innocence. Either Jesus dies, or the nation perishes.” Wow! Caiaphas expresses a central doctrine of Christianity, the substitutionary death of Jesus for sinners! Premise: Follow Jesus, and the nation perishes. Put Jesus to death, and the nation is saved. Conclusion: Jesus must be put to death. The death of only one man is a small price to pay for our ‘place’ and our ‘nation’. Talk about political rhetoric! But look at **:51-52**.

:51-52 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, :52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. Caiaphas uttered “an unconscious and involuntary prophecy.” Yet realize, no human court would decide Jesus’ outcome. Men could do their worst, but they could not alter the divine plan (**Acts 2:22-36**). **Is. 53:6** foretold that there was one coming who would bear the sins of the nation. So Caiaphas didn’t say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied (imparted divine truth) that Jesus would die for the nation, and more than that, for all of God’s children. His words anticipated the mission to the Gentiles (**Eph. 2:11-22**). “Caiaphas unwittingly spoke prophetically of Christ’s sacrificial death.”

If you think about it, the decision they made that day to ‘save the nation’ would in 70 A.D. destroy it! And they lost their ‘place’ also! “Though the Sanhēdrin was successful in crucifying Jesus, the nation did not escape. The Roman general Titus destroyed the city and the nation in A.D. 70. The Jews ended up losing both their temple and their nation.”

:53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. Their decision, which was made before Jesus was even arrested, “rendered His later trial a total mockery. Jesus was not arrested to be tried.” He had already been judged guilty of blasphemy, making Himself equal with God (**5:18**). The authorities were plotting Jesus’ death, not His arrest. They were guilty of the greatest of all sins—the sin of unbelief.

:54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. Jesus, when He became aware of the decision, took appropriate action. God’s hour was not right yet for Him to die. It was not yet Passover. He would die for others, but in the Father’s time, not that of His enemies, and, when He did die on the cross, it was His Father’s will and time, not the religious leaders’ will and time.

So Jesus journeyed about 20 miles NE of Jerusalem to an obscure village.

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Scholars believe Ephraim was located about 4 miles NE of Bethel on the edge of the wilderness. From there Jesus would make a brief visit to Samaria and Galilee (**Lk. 17:11-19:28**) before returning to Jerusalem for the Passover.

:55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. This is the 4th and final Passover mentioned in this gospel (**2:13, 5:2, 6:4**). More than a million people would pack the city. Many of the Jews, therefore, came up to the city early to make the necessary offerings and go through the necessary washings in order to ensure ceremonial cleanness. (For more on the Passover, see **Ex. 12:1-16, Num. 9:6,9-14; 2 Chron. 30:173-17; Jn. 18:28.**) So we have in Jerusalem, the people zealously purifying themselves, “while their leaders had indelibly stained themselves as they ruthlessly plotted the death of the blameless Son of God.”

:56 So they [the Jewish Passover attenders] **were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?”** They were looking for Jesus, just as they had at the Feast of Shelters (**7:11**). Perhaps many wanted to make Him king like in **6:15**. Yet when Jesus had the opportunity to be made king after feeding the 5000, He had refused to be made king. The resurrection of Lazarus, like the rest of Jesus’ life and ministry, was forcing people to a decision about Him. Would Jesus dare show Himself in Jerusalem?

:57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him. All the Jews were required to be informants. Jesus had forced the religious leaders’ hand. There had been several failed attempts to arrest or stone Him (**5:18, 7:30,44; 8:20,59; 10:39**). “Now the Sanhēdrin put out a contract on His life.”

Throughout Jesus’ public ministry, we see God the Father at work, carrying out His program, according to His schedule. When you face choices to believe or not believe, which choice do you make? Many times we face those choices daily. Thanks for working these verses through with me. Joel

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