

**THE STORY of THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST****Lesson 2****Matthew 26.1-5 and John 11.45-57 & 12.9-11****THE EVIL CAST OF CHARACTERS WHO KILLED THE LORD JESUS**

In our last lesson, we began to unfold the human plot against the Lord Jesus to kill Him.

We also noted throughout the lesson that:

(1) not only was this evil murderous plot NO SURPRISE TO HIM,  
but that, in fact, (2) this was God's covenant purpose and plan from before the creation of the world.

We also noted that the murderous hatred and venom that Jesus' enemies had against Him was no new issue.

It had been **building...growing...and intensifying** from the earliest days of His public ministry.

What His enemies had finally settled on here in the days before that last Passover was that  
THEY NEEDED TO MOVE DECISIVELY AND QUICKLY TO GET RID OF HIM...  
even if they had to KILL HIM.

That seems so strange to us -- that religious leaders would be plotting to assassinate another Teacher with such crass and brazen honesty (at least among themselves).

But, there are few hatreds in all the history of mankind  
that are more intense and virulent than religious hatred.

Only, this time, it was directed against THE SON OF GOD...  
and against Someone WHO NEVER DID ANYTHING BUT GOOD.

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Let's go to another account of this same murderous conspiracy.

**WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE WAS ONE OF THE MAIN EVENTS  
WHICH PRECIPITATED THIS FINAL COMMITMENT THAT JESUS MUST BE KILLED?**

Strangely enough, it was ***JESUS' RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE GRAVE.***

This miracle stirred up so much attention toward the Lord Jesus...  
and led so many to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Savior and Redeemer --  
that when the Pharisees heard how the people were responding, they knew what they had to do.

John tells us about these events in ***John 11.***

**Read verses 45-46.**

This is still a few days before that Last Passover Feast.

**Verse 54** tells us that Jesus will leave Bethany (where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived)  
and He will go north to Ephraim for a few days  
before turning around and making the trip back to Jerusalem for the Passover festivities.  
He will, no doubt, come back to Jerusalem in the company of a caravan of family and friends --  
as their tradition and custom was.

But, in the meantime, the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people will be holding their meetings and plotting together against Him.

They didn't have just one meeting. They had many meetings.  
But, they are very serious now and committed to their purpose.

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This is what some of their meetings sounded like: **read verse 47.**

They could not afford to idly stand by while Jesus continued to siphon off all their influence and power over the people's religious following.

***They were so intent on getting rid of all competitive voices and influences they even made up their minds that Lazarus had to be killed also -- because he was resurrected, living proof and evidence of Jesus' Deity and power.***

**Read chapter 12.9-11.**

The Pharisees decided from that time that they could not co-exist with Jesus in the same vicinity... or sphere of influence.

**Read chapter 12.17-19**

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**It was around this time, also, that  
THEY CAME UP WITH THE "POLITICAL REASON" WHY JESUS HAD TO DIE...  
and THE "POLITICAL CHARGE" THEY WOULD PRESS AGAINST HIM.**

**Meet Caiaphas, the high priest**

CAIAPHAS soon emerged as one of the most prominent, powerful, and influential leaders among all those who were plotting together against Jesus to kill Him.

**Read John 11.48-53**

One of the consequences they feared most  
(besides losing their respect among the Jewish people and their influence over them)  
was that THE ROMANS WOULD MOVE IN AND TAKE AWAY  
SOME OF THE NATIONALISTIC PRIVILEGES THEY ENJOYED.

The Romans occupied their land and subjugated their nation -- but they allowed them to pursue some of their Jewish customs and exercise some of their Jewish traditions just to keep them pacified.

The Romans were quick to move in, though, and squash anything that began to look like an uprising... or the emergence of a Jewish Messianic movement.

Jesus' following was quickly beginning to look like such a movement -- even to the Jewish leadership. So, they were beginning to be afraid that the Romans would come in and  
**"take away both our place and nation."**

**THE ROMANS ALLOWED THESE JEWISH LEADERS TO OCCUPY THEIR OFFICES.**

And, especially, the high priest.

The priesthood long ago had ceased to be occupied only by members of the tribe of Levi... or the family of Aaron.

Under the Romans, the high priest's office was a political appointment.  
The high priests were the worst of corrupt politicians at that time.

The Roman governor could appoint whomever he thought would not provoke the Jewish people to resist the Roman occupation -- or maybe even whomever was willing to give him the largest gift in exchange for the office... or whomever was most willing to curry the favor of the Roman governor.

At this time, **Caiaphas** was high priest.  
He held this office for more than 20 years.  
Caiaphas married into this office and power.  
He was son-in-law to Annas. **John 18.13-14**

The high priest's family had a mafia-like control over the Temple properties and activities. When Jesus drove the money-changers and sellers of sacrificial animals out of the Temple, He was disrupting the high priest's commercial interests and profits. **John 2.14-16; Matthew 21.12-13**  
They demanded and enforced a monopolistic control over all these commercial businesses.

If the high priest's family was like the Mafia, then Annas, Caiaphas's father-in-law was the *godfather*. He had to approve everything that was done in the name of the high priest. **Luke 3.2; Acts 4.5-6**

Getting back to **John 11**, and one of their early meetings to plot to kill Jesus, here is what Caiaphas counsels them to do. (**verses 49-50**)

***"You all are going about this the wrong way.  
Let's let His influence take its course...and instead of Him being a threat to us,  
we're going to manipulate Him to work to our advantage.***

***LET HIM STIR UP ALL THE FOLLOWING HE CAN.***

***And then, instead of the Romans coming in and taking away our place and our nation,  
WE WILL TURN HIM IN TO THE ROMANS AS AN INSURGENT...  
AND AS AN INSTIGATOR OF TREASON AND INSURRECTION AGAINST ROME --  
AND THEN, HE WILL DIE...INSTEAD OF OUR NATION."***

This is a "WIN-WIN" proposition for them.

1. They get rid of their competition...
2. They get their sphere of influence back...
3. They get to keep their nation...and their political perks and privileges...
4. And, just think of all the political points they will score with Rome --  
and how they will increase their own political stature and power base with the governor...  
when they turn in "one of their own" who is threatening Rome's interests in Judea.

John makes the commentary that Caiaphas spoke this as a prophecy...since he was high priest that year.  
**Read verses 51-52**

But, he was not prophesying as **a spiritual messenger for God**.  
He had no desire or intention to speak the truth for God...or represent God's interests of any kind --  
not prophetic interests...not redemptive interests...not Scriptural interests.

ONCE AGAIN, GOD WAS OVERRULING THE EVIL DESIGNS AND INTENTIONS OF HIS WORST ENEMIES...AND TURNING THEM INSTEAD TO WORK OUT HIS OWN SOVEREIGN PURPOSES AND PLANS FOR OUR GOOD. (**Genesis 50.20**)

Yes, Jesus, the Christ, would die.  
And, He would die **IN THE PLACE OF THE NATION**.  
But, He wouldn't be their political scapegoat.

HE WOULD BE THE SAVIOR OF ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.  
He would be **“the propitiation (Mercy-Seat, sin Taker-Away),  
not just for the sins of the Jewish people, but also for the whole world.” 1 John 2.2**

When the Lord Jesus was announcing that He would **GIVE HIS LIFE...LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP HIS FATHER HAD GIVEN HIM TO SAVE --**  
He announced that He would reach far beyond the narrow confines of the Jewish nation and gather in His sheep from nations and peoples all over the world.

**John 10.14-18**

**I AM the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.  
As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.  
And other sheep I have which are not of this fold;  
them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice;  
and there will be one flock and one Shepherd.  
Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.  
No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.  
I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.  
THIS COMMAND I HAVE RECEIVED FROM MY FATHER.**

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So, John says in *John 11.53*: Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death.

**The Story of the Passion of the Christ is, in every detail,  
a testimony to God's working out His eternal and sovereign Covenant purposes for our salvation --  
even while His vilest and most powerful enemies are doing all they can  
to UNDO what He is determined to do.**

HE WILL ALLOW THEM TO TAKE THEIR WICKED HANDS  
AND CRUCIFY AND SLAY THE PRINCE OF LIFE (*Acts 3.15*).

But, JESUS CHRIST WILL BE SLAIN AS **THE LAMB OF GOD...  
WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.**

And, He will die **IN GOD'S PREDETERMINED TIME...**  
and **ACCORDING TO GOD'S COVENANT PROVISIONS.**

In **Matthew 26.5**, during their meetings,  
they determined how they would undermine Jesus and deliver Him over to the Romans --  
but they also decided that **IT WOULD BE TOO RISKY TO TRY TO DO THIS  
DURING THE PASSOVER FESTIVITIES...lest there be an uproar among the people.**

The only problem is: **JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S APPOINTED PASSOVER LAMB  
FOR THAT FEAST...AND FOR ALL TIMES.**  
He is the Appointed Fulfillment of All The Passover Prophecies and Promises.  
**1 Corinthians 5.7: For indeed CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER, WAS SACRIFICED FOR US.**

**And, BECAUSE HE DIED FOR US...WE LIVE.**