

MEN'S BREAKFAST - The Plot Thickens

1. Can you think of an example when two or more observers of the same event reach totally different conclusions?
2. When have you challenged company policy? What happened?
3. Without naming names, who is the most dishonest and self-serving person you've ever known?
4. How do you deal with problem people in your life?

John 11:45-57 (NIV) Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith 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.

"What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous 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 place and our nation."

[49] 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. [53] So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

[54] Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

[55] 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 area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" [57] But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.

DISCUSSION: This event, the resuscitation of Lazarus, was so significant that the chief priests called an emergency session of the Sanhedrin. The high priest position was usually for life but under Roman rule they did not want anyone to gain too much power so they changed who was in that position when they wanted.

1. What two differing responses does the Lazarus miracle produce? Why? Do you see similar responses to who Jesus is today? Examples?

2. Who was told about Jesus' miracle? (11:46)

3. What are the chief concerns of the leaders? What

did the Sanhedrin fear? (11:47-48)

4. How do 'they misunderstand the role of the Messiah? How does Caiaphas propose to solve "the Jesus problem"?

5. What did Caiaphas say about Jesus? (11:49-50)

6. What was Caiaphas saying to the Sanhedrin in verse 50?

7. How did Caiaphas prophesy? (11:51-52) How does Caiaphas' murderous threat unwittingly convey prophetic truth about Jesus' death (see 3:16)?

8. How does Caiaphas' real meaning contrast with the prophetic meaning?

9. What did the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin plot to do? (11:53)

10. How did Jesus respond to the Sanhedrin's plot? (11:54)

11. Why did many people go to Jerusalem? (11:55)

12. For whom did the people in Jerusalem look? (11:56)

13. What orders had the chief priests and Pharisees given to the people? (11:57)

14. How does Jesus respond to this new situation? Why?

Related Concept passages:

John 3:16-18 (NIV) 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (NIV) 11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. 13 If we are out of our mind, it is for

the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had

no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 2:14-18 (NIV) 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

John 10:11 (NIV) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

REFLECTION:

1. What would you have done if you had been on the Sanhedrin? Would politics or truth win out with you?

2. In what ways are you most likely to misunderstand who Jesus is?

3. How have you tried to keep Jesus in line with your religious traditions?

4. What does this account reveal about the value of miracles for bringing people to faith in Christ?

5. What motive other than ministry might people have for engaging in Christian service?

6. What personal ambitions might subvert the goal of serving God and others in Christian organizations?

7. When have you intentionally or unintentionally used the church to pursue your own agenda?

8. Why is it so difficult to have pure and selfless motives in life?

9. How do you respond when your goals and your motives conflict with one another?

10. How might Christianity be challenged or threatened by Jesus if He were to come back today?

11. How would you tell a self-centered person the gospel message?

12. What self-centered motive will you ask God to help you change?



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