

John Chapter 11

There are two obvious divisions in this chapter. From verses 1 to 45, we read of the events that took place up to and including the raising of Lazarus, while from verse 46 to the end, we see the effect that this event and others had upon the chief priests in Jerusalem, and especially upon the high priest, Caiaphas.

Verse 1 begins, "Now a certain man named Lazarus...". Back in John chapter 5, we read of the Lord coming to the pool of Bethesda. There is a great multitude of impotent folk surrounding that pool – we can only guess at the number – certainly dozens, maybe even hundreds. But our attention is drawn towards "a certain man". A certain man was there which had an infirmity 38 years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case... The eyes of the Lord rest upon just one man in that crowd. We know the story of how He healed the paralytic man. My point however is that the man remained unnamed. He was "a certain man". When one thinks of the many hundreds that were healed by the Lord Jesus, we read of the names of very few of them. He came to the house of Jairus to raise his daughter, but the daughter's name is not mentioned. He raised from the dead the widow of Nain's son, but his name is not recorded. I believe that is a general principle that runs through all four gospels. But there are exceptions – in Luke chapter 8:2-3, we read of three women who had been healed of evil spirits: Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna. They were healed by the Lord Jesus. Had this been all that was said of them, perhaps they too would have remained anonymous, but verse 3 ends with "which ministered unto Him of their substance". They gave Him something back in return. However great or small, they wanted to give Him something in return. But this was not the end. We read of these women at the cross, and there it is said of them, "which followed Him from Galilee"(Luke 23:49). Wherever He went, they went. They were faithful right to the end. One could not even say this of the twelve disciples. We read of them in Gethsemane that "All the disciples forsook Him and fled"(Matthew 26:56). Only one of the 12 continued on to Calvary, and that was the beloved John. But these women remained faithful, witnessing not only His sufferings and His death, but also His burial. I believe these women are named in scripture, not just for being healed, but also for what they did for the Saviour in return. We read of a number of books in heaven. One is the Book of Life and we thank God the name of every child of God is written there. But in Malachi, we read also of a Book of Remembrance being written before Him for those who feared the Lord and who thought upon His name. We would like our names to be in that book – the names of the faithful. These women were of such a calibre.

And so too was Lazarus. He is about to be not just healed in this chapter but raised from the dead - but so too was the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. So why is Lazarus special? No less than three times over in this chapter we read of the Lord's love for this man. So what made him special? Was it something he said? Not one word spoken by this man was so noteworthy that it merited being recorded in scripture. Was it something then that he did? Again scripture is silent. So why did the Lord love this man? I believe it is simply this that here was a man who loved the Lord and who loved to be in His presence. In chapter 12, we read that Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. A table speaks of fellowship and communion and that's what Lazarus loved – to be with the Lord. But what use is such a man to the work of God? Do we not need doers and preachers? Of course we do. But Lazarus had a great influence upon the men of Bethany and then upon the men of Jerusalem. In Bethany, many believed on the Lord because of Lazarus, and these same men followed the Lord into the city and cried "Hosannah to the son of David".

The town of Lazarus is next mentioned – “Lazarus, of Bethany”. Bethany then was an insignificant little village on the mount of Olives. But when the Lord left this world to go back to heaven, He did not leave from Bethlehem, Nazareth, or Jerusalem. Luke chapter 24 says that, “He led them out as far as to Bethany”. Bethany was surely the nearest place on earth to heaven. In Acts chapter 1:11, we learn that “this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go”. It is the place to which He shall return. His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives. So what was so special about Bethany? In the last verse of John chapter 11, we read of how the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him”. The great city was a hostile place to the Lord Jesus. Out of the 21 chapters of John’s gospel, no fewer than 15 of them describe events that take place in Jerusalem, yet never once do we read of the Lord ever spending a night there. During the last week before the cross, the Lord and His disciples stayed in Bethany. There was a home there where He was welcomed. In Luke chapter 10, we read that Martha received Him into her house. This home is a picture surely of the Church of God. Martha served, Mary worshipped, and Lazarus sat at the table with Him.

What else do we learn about Bethany? Verse 1 continues – “the town of Mary and her sister Martha”. Edinburgh is famous for its castle, Paris for the Eiffel Tower, New York for the statue of liberty, but Bethany is famous for being the town of Mary and Martha. They added character to the town – the town added nothing to them. Even today, Bethany is a place of no great note or of charm.

Verse 2 goes on to define for us exactly who this Mary was, for there are four women of this name in our gospels.

Mary, the mother of Jesus

Mary Magdalene

Mary the mother of James and Joseph

Mary of Bethany

Here we read of this Mary – “It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment”. We are left in no doubt. We will read of this anointing in John chapter 12. This is what Mary is remembered for. It is her devotion to the Lord Jesus that prompted this deed. In Luke chapter 10, she sat at His feet and heard His word. In John chapter 11, she sees her brother rise again from the tomb. She shows her love by coming with the ointment in John chapter 12. The Lord says a lovely thing about this woman in Mark 14:9. “Whosoever the gospel is preached this that woman hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her”. Her worship is obviously not part of the gospel message, but wherever the gospel is preached it shall be spoken of her. Why is this? We often hear the expression, “Saved to serve”. That is true of course, but is the Lord not also saying, “Saved to worship”. The purpose of God in the gospel is not just to save souls – it is to produce worship in the hearts of His people.

In verse 3, the 2 sisters send a message to the Lord. “Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick”. They could just as easily have said, “Lazarus is sick”. But they go further, “He whom Thou lovest”. What are they doing here? Are they not pulling on the heartstrings of the Saviour. This is no stranger here. It is not just a man known of the Lord Jesus, but a man who was loved by Him. Does not the woman of Canaan do the same to the Lord Jesus? In Matthew 15:22, she comes pleading, “Thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon”. The response of the Lord to this is negative. “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs”. But when her first approach is unsuccessful, she utters a prayer from the heart of an anxious mother, “Lord, help me”. The Lord could no longer refuse. In our prayer life, we could simply make it like a shopping list of requests. Better still to pull on the heartstrings of God to make Him more disposed to answer our requests.

So, returning to John 11:3, the sisters' message was, "He whom Thou lovest is sick". For "lovest", they used the Greek verb "phileo", which means "to be fond of". It is the love we have as brethren. This love of the Saviour would soon be put to the test, and indeed would perhaps be called into question by many at Bethany, including perhaps Mary and Martha themselves. That is surely why the Spirit of God, writing through John, adds the comment in verse 5, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". "Love" in verse 5 is "agape", which is used for example in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world". It is divine love. The Lord therefore loved these three people, and in particular here Lazarus, even more than they would have claimed themselves.

Verse 4 tells us what the Lord said to His disciples first of all, when He heard the news. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified thereby". Soon the Lord would be speaking in the upper room to tell his disciples how His own death would glorify God and Himself, but first He speaks of the circumstances surrounding Lazarus. God allowed the death of Lazarus to glorify Himself and His Son. The raising of Lazarus would indeed be a outstanding proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus. In John 20, the writer tells us why he had selected only a few of the miracles or signs of the Lord Jesus. There are perhaps 32 distinct miracles performed by the Lord in all 4 gospels but John has chosen only 8. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God".

Romans chapter 1:4 teaches us concerning the Lord that "He was declared Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead". This refers, not to His resurrection, for the word "dead" is plural, but to those whom He raised from the dead. But did not others do the same thing. Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarepath. For Elijah, this was his only time that he did so. Then Elisha also raised the son of the Shunamite woman – the only occasion also. The widow's son had only just died when Elijah raised him. The Shunamite's son had been dead for a few hours while she searched for and found Elisha. But the work of the Lord far outshone that of the two great prophets. He raised the dead, not once, but three times in total. The daughter of Jairus had just died when the Lord raised her. The widow of Nain's son was on his way to his burial when the Lord raised him, but Lazarus had been dead for four days when the Lord did this miracle in John 11. We learn that nothing is impossible for Him. Of course some of His saints have been dead now for almost 2,000 years but we know that the dead in Christ shall rise with their new bodies. We shall meet one another and the Lord Himself in that day.

This miracle in John 11 proves just who the Lord is. The Lord Himself said, "As the Father hath life in Himself, even so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself"(John 5:26). John chapter 1:4 has already stated, "In Him was life, and the life was the life of men". The Lord Jesus is the very source of all life. Hence God and His Son were going to be glorified in this deed.

But in verse 6, an amazing thing is written. "He abode two days still in the same place where He was". What kind of love was this? Surely, in response to such an urgent and tender appeal from the two sisters, the Lord would have rushed immediately to Bethany? We learn from verse 39 that it would already have been too late even if the Lord had gone straight away. It would appear that Lazarus had died almost as soon as the messengers left. The Lord was on the other side of Jordan at this time (see chapter 10:40), hence it would take the messengers a full day to find Him and a full day to return. So the Lord would have been expected in Bethany two days after the death of Lazarus. But two days came and went. The third day became the fourth day and still no sign of Him. Questions would be starting to arise. Did the Lord really care for Lazarus? Does He really care for us? Why has He not come sooner? The reason was, as we have heard Him say, for the glory of God.

In verse 7, after these 2 days had elapsed, the Lord says to His disciples, "Let us go

into Judaea again". Now we know that the Lord had an even greater reason than that of Lazarus to go to Judaea. He had the cross before Him and His sacrificial and vicarious death for us. But as far as the disciples were concerned, He was putting His life in danger for Lazarus' sake. The disciples plead with Him, "The Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou hither again?" This was indeed the case for chapter 10:31 tells us, "The Jews took up stones again to stone Him". The disciples her plead with Him, in chapter 18, Peter would take up a sword to try and defend Him, but the Lord had a baptism to be baptised with and how He was straightened till it be accomplished. In verses 9 and 10, the Lord goes on to speak of night and day. What does He mean by these words? I think He is referring to the openness of His work. He will say later to Caiaphas in John 18:10, " I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. In Mark chapter 3, He meets in the synagogue a man with a withered hand. He is aware of the fact that all eyes are upon Him to see if He would heal on the Sabbath day. What does He say to the man? Stand forth in the midst. He calls him forward to where every eye can see Him. What was true of Him should be true also of us. John writes in his first epistle, chapter 1, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". All our lives should be transparent. So here in John 11, it is as if the Lord is asking , "Should I sneak into Judaea like a thief in the night, afraid to be seen?"

In verse 11 to 14, the Lord now demonstrates His knowledge of what had taken place in Bethany. In verse 11, He says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth". In verse 14, He speaks more plainly, "Lazarus is dead". The word "sleep" is often used in the Bible to describe the death of the Lord's people. In Acts chapter 7, we read of the brutal death of Stephen as men are stoning him. Do we read that he died? Rather, says the scripture, "He fell asleep". So too in I Thessalonians chapter 4, we read of those who "sleep in Jesus". Sleep would speak of a temporary state of things, We sleep at night and look forward to a new day in the morning. So too do the dead in Christ.

This knowledge displayed by the Lord in these verses demonstrates again that He possesses all the attributes of deity. The raising of Lazarus will demonstrate His power, but here He demonstrates His omniscience. So too in chapter 1 when He says of Nathaniel, "An Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile". Nathaniel is amazed at such knowledge from this stranger, and confesses Him as the Son of God and the King of Israel. In chapter 2, we read that many believed in Him when they saw the miracles that He did but He did not commit Himself to them for He knew what was in man. In chapter 4 of course He tells the woman at the well, "Thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband". No wonder the woman said of Him, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" So into chapter 5 where He meets the man by the pool and the scripture says, He "knew that He had been now a long time in that case". In chapter 13, He knew that Judas would betray Him and indeed sends him off into the night. Then in chapter 18, the Lord enters Gethsemane knowing all the things that were to be accomplished.

So why again is there this two days delay? He explains to His disciples, "To the intent that ye might believe". In the Lord's first miracle at Cana in Galilee, it is said that "He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him". How much will He strengthen the faith of His disciples by what they are about to witness in Bethany.

In verse 16, the Lord gets a response from Thomas who says to the other disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him". These are bold words coming from a man who, as we know, in just a few days time refused to believe that the Lord had risen from the tomb. Sometimes it is not bold words that demonstrate our faith but the consistency of our deeds. Peter was equally bold in the upper room when He said that

he was ready to die for the Lord. "I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Likewise said they all". These brave words melted away before a servant maid in the palace of the High Priest.

Verse 17 onwards describes the event as it is about to unfold at Bethany. By the time the Lord arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days. The house is full of those Jews who had come from Jerusalem to comfort the two sisters for their sad loss. Martha hears that the Lord is approaching the town and she went out to meet Him. Martha is always the busy sister. She is busy serving the table in Luke 10 and she is still serving in John chapter 12. The Lord needs busy people. Mary on the other hand sat still in the house. When Martha meets the Lord, she makes three statements of faith – one to do with the past, one to do with the present, and one to do with the future. As far as the past is concerned, she says to the Lord, "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". She had faith to believe that if only the Lord had been present when Lazarus fell sick, he would not have died. This faith came from what they had come to know of Him personally and no doubt accounts of His miracles elsewhere had also reached this home in Bethany. But Martha also had faith in the present – or so it would seem. She continues in verse 22, "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee". She perhaps did not evaluate this fully but she was clinging on to a faint hope that the Lord could still do something for them. In response to Martha's second statement, the Lord replies, "Thy brother shall rise again". This is the answer to Martha's second statement but she fails to grasp the meaning of it. She immediately goes to make a declaration of her faith for the future. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She has stated the Jewish expectation that at the end of time, there would be a resurrection of all the dead. This indeed was as far as the Lord went in John chapter 5:28 and 29. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth". This speaks of a general resurrection of the dead. This was all that the Old Testament saints would have known. In what is reckoned to be the oldest of the books of the Bible, Job speaks of his hope in seeing God one day. He says, "Yet in my flesh shall I see God". He continues about God, "Whom I shall see for myself. Mine eyes shall behold Him and not another". David knew of resurrection for he speaks of the son of Bathsheba who has just died that "I will go to him". He was certain that he would see the child again. In Daniel chapter 12:2, the prophet writes, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt". Martha would know nothing of a resurrection out from among the dead. It is only Paul that fully reveals this in his epistles. He speaks literally of "an out-resurrection from among the dead" (Philippians chapter 3:11).

But the Lord is about to reveal to Martha new truth regarding resurrection. It is as near as we come in the gospels to a revelation of what we have come to call the Rapture of the saints. The Lord first of all personalises the event. "I am the resurrection and the life". Without Christ, there is no resurrection. He had to go into death to break the power of Satan and to loose the bonds of death. He alone could pay on our account the wages of sin, which is death. But the resurrection here is for believers only. "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live". This is developed later in I Thessalonians 4. "The dead in Christ shall rise first". Then the Lord continues to speak about the living. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeth thou this?" This again is explained in I Thessalonians 4. "We the living that remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air". Paul is really dealing with three separate events in this section, all of which grant you will take place almost instantaneously. There is resurrection, there is re-union, and there is rapture. The dead rise first. There is re-union for we are caught up together with them ie the living and the dead together, then we are caught up to meet Him. In a way the scene at Bethany is a picture of this. Lazarus rises from the dead,

he meets Martha and Mary again, then all three of them meet the Lord who is standing at the tomb.

But did Martha grasp this? It is obvious from her reply that these words have passed over her head, for she changes the subject altogether in her reply. The Lord asks, "Believest thou this?". We perhaps should ask ourselves such a question from time to time. We get so despondent at times, we need to read the scripture then ask, "Believest thou this?" Although Martha misses the point, yet she comes out with a wonderful confession of faith. "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God". We speak much of Peter's confession in Matthew 16. The Lord says, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but My Father which is in heaven". Martha's words here equal those of Peter yet they hardly rate a mention by us. It is this woman's faith that makes the statement. She couldn't grasp the meaning of His words but she had a firm grasp of Him. There is a good principle here – if we can't lay hold of the truth at the time, then lay hold of him.

Indeed, failure to keep hold of Him can lead to doctrinal error. Paul says to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you in Christ's grace unto another gospel which is not another"

Having spoken these words, Martha now goes back to the house to fetch Mary. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee". At this Mary rose up quickly to go and meet Him. The moment of meeting is described for us in verse 32, Note how she begins with the very same words as were used by her sister. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". There is no difference in what she said, but there was a world of difference in how she said it. While Martha stood before the Lord, it is said of Mary, "She fell down at His feet". When you think of it, she is always at His feet. In Luke 10 on that first occasion in the house, we read that she sat at His feet and heard His word". She does likewise in John 11, and again in John chapter 12, she anointed His feet with ointment and wiped them with her hair. What would this place at His feet speak of? Would it not speak of humility? John the Baptist was the greatest born of women and the greatest of all the prophets according to the Lord Himself, yet John knew his place relative to the Lord. "The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." John said, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me". The feet would also speak of worship. In Luke chapter 7, we read of the woman of the city who was a sinner. She came behind the Lord Jesus, raining tears upon His feet, wiping His feet with her hair, and anointing His feet with ointment. Why did she do this? Says the Lord of her, "She was forgiven much, for she loved much". Mary of Bethany also came as worshipper to His feet in John 12. The feet are also a place of instruction. Paul speaks of being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel – he learned much at the master's feet. We do well to follow Mary's example.

From verse 33, we see the Lord's response to what was going on around Him. He saw Mary weeping and the Jews also weeping. He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. We can almost see in this incident an illustration of Hebrews chapter 4. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities". The One who shared in the joy of a marriage in Cana of Galilee also experienced sorrow at a graveside, and felt the pain Himself. There were a few other things that caused Him sorrow. There was the contemplation of His death of course in John 12:27. "Now is My soul troubled and what shall I say, Save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour". But in John 13:21, a different trouble altogether overcame Him. He was troubled in spirit and said, "One of you shall betray Me". Even as He thought about Judas, He was troubled. He knew from the beginning that Judas would do this. Every day for three and a half years He would look at Judas and know what he would do. The Lord had to tell the others that night else they would think that He too had been deceived. But the Lord didn't do it in a hard vindictive way. It troubled Him to

think that after all this time, Judas would go out and do such a thing. But here in John 11, He both groaned and was troubled. Verse 38 says again, "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself". He fully entered into the grief of Mary and the Jews. He would feel their grief of course but He alone would grieve at the end result of sin. "The wages of sin is death".

In verse 34, He asks, "Where have ye laid Him?" The answer comes, "Lord, come and see". Verse 35 says simply, "Jesus wept". It is the shortest verse as we know in the Bible, although we know that verse numbers were only added at a later date as an "aide-memoir". There is one other two word verse in the New Testament. It is found in I Thess 5 and it expresses the very opposite sentiment, "Rejoice evermore". I am led to believe that in the Greek text, both verse are almost exactly the same length.

But our verse here is short and terse. "Jesus wept". The Spirit of God used a different word here for the weeping of Jesus compared to that of Mary or the Jews. They were grief stricken – overcome with emotion. Their whole bodies were involved in their grief. When Jesus wept, it simply means, "Jesus shed tears". Does this lessen in any way His grief. No rather, it means that even in His sorrow, He was under control. We often see on our TV screens the weeping and wailing of the Eastern women at the loss of a loved one, but the Lord was in control. It was the same on one occasion when He was angry and purged the temple. He came in, looked around Him, then went away and made a scourge of small cords. He inflicted no more pain than was necessary to drive out the sheep and oxen.

We have suggested that the love of the Saviour may have been called into question by His delay, but when men saw His tears, then they said, "Behold how He loved him". Again, they use the word "phileo", Behold how fond He was of him, but as verse 5 has told us, "Jesus loved (agape) Lazarus ". The Jews then repeat the sentiments of the two sisters. "Could not this man have caused that even this man should not have died".

When the Lord arrives at the cave, He gives the command, "Take ye away the stone". Martha however protests, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days". Where now was that faith for the present that Martha had spoken of earlier? "Even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee". She had faith for what was past, and faith for what was to come, yet her faith abandoned her for the present. We dare not criticise her for are we not often just the same. We look back to the day of salvation and our faith was total. We look back to circumstances in the past and faith helped us through. We look forward to events in the future and faith sustains us. But today we have a problem and suddenly our faith deserts us. Philip and Andrew were put to the test in John chapter 6. In chapter 1, both these men made great claims for the Lord Jesus. Said Philip to Nathaniel, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write". Andrew said to his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah, which is to say, the Christ". But in chapter 6 of this gospel, when faced with the challenge of the multitude in the wilderness, Philip said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little". The problem was too big, according to Philip. Andrew on the other hand said that his resources were too small. "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they amongst so many".

In verse 40, the Lord reminds Martha of her earlier statement in verse 22. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God". The Lord now speaks to the Father in prayer. He does not say now, "Father, raise Lazarus". Indeed, He has already prayed for this, and the prayer has been heard and granted. Says the Lord, "I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me". When He has finished praying, He says, "Lazarus, come forth" – and Lazarus obeyed. He comes out bound hand and foot with a napkin about his face. How different was the resurrection of the Lord.

When the disciples looked into the tomb, they saw the linen clothes lying and the napkin that was about His face, not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped together in a place by itself". There was something about the way the clothes were left, for John saw and believed. The fact that the clothes were still there told the lie to the story of the Jews that His disciples had come and stolen away the body. If they had done so, why would they have left the clothes behind. They would just have taken the body as it was. Naturally speaking, the Lord Himself could not have unwrapped the clothes. Certain sects of Muslims have said that the Lord did not die at all but simply swooned on the cross. But His body had been embalmed by Nicodemus with a hundred pounds of spices, then wrapped in the cloth that Joseph brought. No, I believe there was an order to the garments that impressed the disciples. In John 20:12, we read of two angels sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Were they sitting on either side of the linen clothes? And what about the napkin? - wrapped together and laid aside in a place by itself. It has been suggested that the clothes were lying just as if the body had passed straight through them, leaving them undisturbed. The Bible does not say this of course, but it is perhaps not such an extravagant supposition to make. Certainly, there was something very significant about the way the clothes were lying.

There was a twofold reaction to this miracle. Many believed on Him, but others went and told the Pharisees what things Jesus had done. It was bad enough in the synagogue when the man with the withered hand was healed before them all. Here now was a man who had been dead for four days walking out of a tomb, yet there were still some who did not believe. No wonder the scripture says, "Though He did so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him"

Verse 47 to the end gives us the reaction to all these events in Jerusalem, especially amongst the rulers in the council. They acknowledge the miracles done by the Lord Jesus. "What do we, for this man doeth many miracles?" There is no attempt made now to deny His miracles. After more than three years, the evidence was there for all to see. At least, Nicodemus who came at the very beginning, acknowledged not only the miracles but also the fact that God was with the Lord Jesus. John 3:2 says, "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him". But here in John 11, the Pharisees had two problems about allowing Him to continue.

1. All will believe in Him
2. The Romans shall come and take away our place and nation

Either way, they were jealous of their own status. They were envious of the fact that the Lord Jesus was gathering so many disciples after Himself. When the Lord was taken captive by them, Caiaphas questioned Him regarding His disciples and His doctrine. It is significant that the disciples are mentioned first. No wonder Pilate perceived that for envy they had delivered Him. The second problem was also created by self interest. "The Romans shall come and take away our place and nation". In reality, the occupying force had taken away their nation, but what really concerned them was their place. Up till now, the Romans seem to have taken no notice of this preacher from Galilee. Pilate was not perturbed when they said of the Lord Jesus that He was making Himself a king.

But the priests are interrupted by Caiaphas himself. John adds the little comment, "Being the High Priest that same year". I believe that by this time, Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas were taking it in turns, a year at a time, to be the high priest of Israel. Certainly in Luke 3:2, we read of "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests". Two high priests at the same time was an obvious error. But they resolved the matter, not by one of them standing down, but by each of them fulfilling the office in alternate years. Apart from this comment here in John 11 about "that same year", we read in Acts 4:6 - "And Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas". In the days leading up to

Calvary, it was Caiaphas who held the title although the fact that they led the Lord from Gethsemane first to Annas and then to Caiaphas, suggests that the older man held the real authority. Here then were men who had no religious or moral authority for sitting in judgement over the Lord Jesus. We also read in Matthew 26:65 that during the questioning of the Lord, the high priest rent his clothes. This was an act that was expressly forbidden under the law, but these men were outside the law completely.

In verse 49 and 50, Caiaphas rebukes his fellows. "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not". The word "expedient" here means "profitable" or "advantageous", and of course it was profitable for Israel, as also for us, that One should die a vicarious death. What prompted Caiaphas to speak such truth? Here was a man who was totally opposed to the Lord Jesus yet he spoke truth concerning Him. The scripture continues, "Being high priest that same year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation". It illustrates the point that one doesn't need to be saved to exercise a spiritual gift. The prophet Balaam was a wicked man who taught Balak how to cast a stumbling block before Israel, yet Balaam spoke many a true word about Israel in Numbers 25 to 28. So too in a future day, many will say to the Lord, "Have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name done many wonderful works". His reply will be, "Depart from Me, I never knew you".

So finally, in verse 52, the decision was taken to put the Lord to death. This caused the Lord to withdraw to a city called Ephraim. But soon, as we read in verses 55 to 57, Jerusalem was filling up with people who had come up to celebrate the feast of Passover. Speculation was rife as the question was being asked, "What think ye, that He will not come to the feast?" Given that He might, the chief priests and Pharisees issued a commandment that "if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him".