

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 40 CHRIST FEARED BY THE SANHEDRIN

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

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CHAPTER 40

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John 11:45-57

The following is submitted as an Analysis of the passage which is to be before us:— 1. The effects of Christ's great miracle, verses 45, 46. 2. The Council and their predicament, verses 47, 48. 3. Caiaphas and his counsel: verses 49, 50. 4. The Holy Spirit's interpretation, verses 51, 52. 5. The Council's decision and Christ's response, verses 53, 54. 6. The Feast of the Passover and the purification of the Jews, verses 55, 56. 7. The commandment of the Council, verse 57. In the closing section of John 11 we are shown the effects of the awe-inspiring miracle recorded in the earlier part of the chapter. And we are at once struck with what is here omitted. The Holy Spirit has told us of the varying impressions made upon the "many Jews" who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, but nothing whatever is said of the feelings of either Lazarus or his sisters! Several reasons may be suggested for this. In the first place, the Bible is not written to satisfy an idle curiosity. It would not have suited the ways of God for us to know now what was retained by the memory of Lazarus as he returned from the Unseen to this world. It is not God who moves Spiritualists to pry into that which lies behind the veil. In the second place, there is a beautiful delicacy in concealing from us the emotions of Martha and Mary. We are not allowed to obtrude into the privacy of their home after their loved one had been restored to them! In the third place, may we not reverently say, the joy of the sisters was too great for utterance. An impostor inventing this story would have made this item very prominent, supposing that it would furnish a suitable and appropriate climax to the narrative. But the spiritual mind discerns that its very omission is an evidence of the Divine perfections of this inspired record. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him" (John 11:45). Though John says nothing about the effects which the raising of Lazarus had upon any of the members of the Bethany family, it is striking to observe how the Holy Spirit here adheres to His unity of purpose. All through this Gospel He has shown us the growing enmity of the "Jews," an enmity which was now so swiftly to culminate in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. So now, without stopping to draw any moral from the great "sign" which the Messiah had just given, without so much as making a single comment upon it He at once tells us how it was regarded by the Jews! They, as ever, were divided

about the Lord Jesus (cf. John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). A goodly number of those who had witnessed the coming forth of Lazarus from the tomb "believed on him." Without attempting to analyze their faith, this we may safely say: their enmity was subdued, their hostility was discarded, temporarily at least. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." "It is remarkable that our Evangelist speaks of them as those who had come to Mary. Their regard for her led them to have regard to Him whom she so deeply loved. Perhaps too they had conversed with her about Him, and she had borne testimony unto Him, and impressed them favorably concerning Him, and prepared them for their faith in Him" (Dr. John Brown). The wording of this 45th verse is most significant. It does not say, "Then many of the Jews came to Mary, who, seeing the things which Jesus did, believed on him," but "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." The two things are linked together—the coming to Mary and the seeing the things which He did—as explaining why they "believed on him." It reminds us of what we read of in John 4:39, 41, 42: "And many of the Samaritans believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did . . . And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." "But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done" (John 11:46). "But": ominous word is this. Solemn is the contrast now presented. Some of those who had witnessed the miracle went at once to the Pharisees and told them of what Christ had done. Most probably they were their spies. Their motive in reporting to these inveterate enemies of our Lord cannot be misunderstood; they went not to modify but to inflame their wrath. What an example of incorrigible hardness of heart! Alas, what is man! Even miracles were to some "a savor of death unto death"! "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council" (John 11:47). The "chief priests" were, in all probability, Sadducees; we know that the high priest was, see Acts 5:17. The "Pharisees" were their theological opponents. These two rival sects hated each other most bitterly, yet, in this evil work of persecuting the Lord Jesus, they buried their differences, and eagerly joined together in the common crime. The same thing is witnessed in connection with Herod and Pilate: "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves" (Luke 23:11, 12)! Each of these cases was a fulfillment of the prophecy which the Holy Spirit had given through David long before: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Christ" (Ps. 2:2). "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles" (John 11:47). The "council" was deeply stirred by the evidence before them. Jesus had clearly demonstrated that he was the Christ, and they ought forthwith to have acknowledged Him. Instead of doing so they chided themselves for their delay at not having apprehended and silenced Him before. "What do we?" they asked. Why are we so dilatory? On a previous occasion, these same men had sent officers to arrest Christ (John 7:32), but instead of doing so they returned to their masters saying, "Never man spake like this man," and then, in the providence of God, Nicodemus objected, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (John 7:51), and this broke up their conference. But now things had come to a head. They did know what He was doing. "For this man doeth many miracles." This they could not deny. Very solemn was it. They owned the genuineness of His miracles, yet were their consciences unmoved. How this exposes the uselessness of much that is being done today. Some think they have accomplished much if they demonstrate to the intellect the truth of Christ's miracles. We often wonder if such men really believe in the total depravity of human nature. Souls are not brought into the presence of God, or saved, by such means. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Nothing but omnipotent and sovereign

grace is of any avail for those who are lost. And the only thing God uses to quicken the dead is His own Word. One who has really passed from death unto life has no need for so-called "Christian Evidences" to buttress his faith: one who is yet dead in trespasses and sins has no capacity of heart to appreciate them. Preach the Word, not argue and reason about the miracles of the Bible, is our business! "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him" (John 11:48). How these words reveal the awful enmity of their hearts: no matter what others did, they were determined not to believe. In our first chapter on John 11 we called attention to the link between this chapter and Luke 16. In each instance there was a "Lazarus." The very name, then, of the one whom Christ had just raised at Bethany, should have served to remind them of His warning words at the close of Luke 16. Well did Christ say of them, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (verse 31). What a proof that witnessing miracles will not bring dead sinners to the feet of Christ! "We must never wonder if we see abounding unbelief in our own times, and around our own homes. It may seem at first inexplicable to us, how men cannot see the truth which seems so clear to ourselves, and do not receive the Gospel which appears so worthy of acceptance. But the plain truth is, that man's unbelief is a far more deeply-seated disease than is generally reckoned. It is proof against the logic of facts, against reasoning, against moral suasion. Nothing can melt it down but the grace of God. If we ourselves believe, we can never be too thankful. But we must never count it a strange thing, if we see many of our fellow men as hardened and unbelieving as the Jews" (Bishop Ryle). "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). It was only to be expected that the resurrection of Lazarus would raise a wave of popular excitement. Any stir among the common people the leaders considered would be dangerous, especially at passover time, then nigh at hand, when Jerusalem would be filled with crowds of Israelites, ready to take fire from any spark which might fall among them (cf. John 12:12, 13). The Council therefore deemed it wisest to concert measures at once for repressing the nascent enthusiasm. Something must be done, but what they hardly knew. They feared that a disturbance would bring Rome's heavy hand down upon them and lead to the loss of what national life still remained to them. But their fears were not from any concern which they had for God's glory, nor were they even moved by patriotic instinct. It was sordid self-interest. "They will take away our place," the temple (Greek "topos" used in Acts 6:13, 14; Acts 21:28, 29, where, plainly, the temple is in view), which was the center and source of all their influence and power. They claimed for themselves what belonged to God. The holy things were, in their eyes, their special property. Palestine had been annexed as a province to the Roman Empire, and as was customary with that people, they allowed those whom they conquered a considerable measure of self-government. The Jews were permitted to continue the temple services and to hold their ecclesiastical court. It was those who were in position of power who here took the lead against Christ. They imagined that if they continued to leave Him alone, His following would increase, and the people set Him up as their King. It mattered not that He had taught, "My kingdom is not of this world" (18:36); it mattered not that He retired when the people had desired to take Him by force and make Him their King (John 6:15). Enough that they supposed His claims threatened to interfere with their schemes of worldly prosperity and self-aggrandizement. It is indeed striking to see the utter blindness of these men. They imagined that if they stopped short the career of Christ they would protect themselves from the Romans. But the very things they feared came to pass. They crucified Christ. And what was the sequel? Less than forty years afterward the Roman army did come, destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple and carried away the whole nation into captivity. A thoughtful writer has remarked on this point: "The well-read Christian need hardly be reminded of many like things in the history of Christ's Church. The Roman emperors persecuted the Christians in the first three centuries, and thought it a positive duty not to let them alone. But the more they persecuted them the more they increased. The blood of the martyrs

became the seed of the Church. So, too, the English Papists, in the days of Queen Mary persecuted the Protestants and thought that truth was in danger if they left them alone. But the more they burned our forefathers, the more they confirmed men's minds in steadfast attachment to the doctrines of the Reformation. In short, the words of the second Psalm are continually verified in this world. The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel against the Lord. But 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.' God can make the designs of His enemies work together for the good of His people, and cause the wrath of men to praise Him. In days of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy, believers may rest patiently in the Lord. The very things that at one time seem likely to hurt them, shall prove in the end to be for their gain." "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, 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" (John 11:49, 50). The Council was puzzled. They saw in Christ, as they thought, a menace to their interests, but what course to follow they scarcely knew. Up to this point they had simply asked one another questions. Impatient at the vacillations of the priests and Pharisees, the high priest brusquely and contemptuously swept aside their deliberations with, "Ye know nothing at all." "The one point to keep before us is our own interests. Let that be clearly understood. When we once ask, What is expedient for us, there can be no doubt about the answer. This Man must die! Never mind about His miracles, or His teachings, or the beauty of His character, His life is a perpetual danger to our prerogatives. I vote for death." As John 11:53 shows us, the evil motion of Caiaphas was carried. The Council regarded it as a brilliant solution to their difficulty. "If this popular Nazarene be slain not only will suspicion be removed from us, but our loyalty to the Roman Empire will be unmistakably established. The execution of Jesus will not only show that we have no intention of revolting, but rather will the slaying of this Man, who is seeking to establish an independent kingdom, plainly evidence our desire and purpose to remain the faithful subjects of Caesar. Thus our watchful zeal for the integrity of the Empire will not only establish confidence but win the applause of the jealous power of Rome? Caiaphas spoke as an unscrupulous politician who sacrifices righteousness and truth for party interests. So too in accepting his policy, the Council persuaded themselves that political prudence required the carrying out of his counsel rather than that the Romans should be provoked. "Our place" was what they considered. It was precisely what the Lord had foretold: "But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours" (Luke 20:14). Favor from Caesar rather than from God, was what their hearts desired. "Unlike Abraham they took riches from the king of Sodom instead of blessings from the hands of Melchizedek. They chose the patronage of Rome rather than know the resurrection-power of the Son of God" (Mr. Bellett). Solemn warning is this for us to be governed by higher principles than "expediency." "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11:51). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Strikingly was this illustrated here. Caiaphas was actuated by political expediency: the Lord Jesus was to be a State victim. Little did he know of the deep meaning of the words that he uttered, "It is expedient that one man die for the people": little did he realize that he had been moved of God to utter a prophecy to the honor of Him whom he despised. What we have in this verse and in the one following is the Holy Spirit's parenthetical explanation and amplification upon this saying of the high priest's. Altogether unconscious of the fact, Caiaphas had "prophesied," and as 2 Peter 1:20, 21 tells us, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation i.e. human origination, for the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man." The instance before us is closely parallel with the case of Balaam in the O.T., who also "prophesied" against his will. The subject is indeed a profound one, and one which human wisdom has stumbled over in every age, nevertheless the teaching of Scripture is very clear upon

the point: all things, in the final analysis, are of God. Nowhere is this more evident than in connection with the treatment which the Lord Jesus received at the hands of wicked men. Referring to this very decision of the Council (among other things) Acts 4:26-28 tells us, "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." It had been decreed in the eternal counsels of the Godhead that Christ should die, and die for Israel, and when Caiaphas advanced his proposal he was but a link in the chain which brought that decree to pass. This was not his intention, of course. His motive was evil only, and therein was he justly guilty. What we have here is the antitype of that which had been foreshadowed long centuries before. The brethren of Joseph by their cruel counsels thought to defeat the purpose of God, who had made it known that they should yet pay homage to their younger brother. Yet in delivering him up to the Ishmaelites, though their intention was evil only, nevertheless, they did but bring to pass the purpose of God. So Caiaphas fulfilled the very counsel of God concerning Christ, which he meant to bring to nothing, by prophesying that He should die for the people. Well may Christ have said to Caiaphas, as Joseph had said to his brethren, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20)! "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11:51). What light this throws on the nature of Christ's death! It brings out its twofold aspect. From the human side it was a brutal murder for political ends: Caiaphas and the priests slaying Him to avoid an unpopular tumult that might threaten their prerogatives; Pilate consenting to His death to avoid the unpopularity which might follow a refusal. But from the Divine side, the death of Christ was a vicarious sacrifice for sinners. It was God making the wrath of man to praise Him. "The greatest crime ever done in the world is the greatest blessing ever given to the world. Man's sin works out the loftiest Divine purpose, even as the coral insects blindly building up the reef that keeps back the waters or, as the sea in its wild, impotent rage, seeking to overwhelm the land, only throws upon the beach a barrier that confines its waves and curbs its fury" (Dr. MacLaren). "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). As the previous verse gives us the Holy Spirit's explanation of the words of Caiaphas, this one contains His amplification: as verse 51 informs us of the nature of Christ's death, verse 52 tells us of the power and scope of it. The great Sacrifice was not offered to God at random. The redemption-price which was paid at the Cross was not offered without definite design. Christ died not simply to make salvation possible, but to make it certain. Nowhere in Scripture is there a more emphatic and explicit statement concerning the objects for which the Atonement was made. No excuse whatever is there for the vague (we should say, unscriptural) views, now so sadly prevalent in Christendom, concerning the ones for whom Christ died. To say that He died for the human race is not only to fly in the face of this plain scripture, but it is grossly dishonoring to the sacrifice of Christ. A large portion of the human race die un-saved, and if Christ died for them, then was His death largely in vain. This means that the greatest of all the works of God is comparatively a failure. How horrible! What a reflection upon the Divine character! Surely men do not stop to examine whither their premises lead them. But how blessed to turn away from man's perversions to the Truth itself. Scripture tells us that Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." No sophistry can evade the fact that these words give positive assurance that every one for whom Christ died will, most certainly, be saved. Christ died for sinners. But everything turns on the significance of the preposition. What is meant by "Christ died for sinners"? To answer that Christ died in order to make it possible for God to righteously receive sinners who come to Him through Christ, is only saying what many a Socinian has affirmed. The testing of a man's orthodoxy on this vital truth of the

Atonement requires something far more definite than this. The saving efficacy of the Atonement lies in the vicarious nature of Christ's death, in His representing certain persons, in His bearing their sins, in His being made a curse for them, in His purchasing them, spirit and soul and body. It will not do to evade this by saying, "There is such a fulness in the satisfaction of Christ, as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in Him." Scripture always ascribes the salvation of a sinner, not to any abstract "sufficiency," but to the vicarious nature, the substitutional character of the death of Christ. The Atonement, therefore, is in no sense sufficient for a man, unless the Lord Jesus died for that man: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us" (1 Thess. 5:9, 10). "If the nature of this 'sufficiency' for all men be sifted, it will appear to be nothing more than a conditional 'sufficiency,' such as the Arminians attribute to their universal redemption—the condition is: were the whole world to believe on Him. The condition, however, is not so easily performed. Many professors speak of faith in Christ as comparatively an easy matter, as though it were within the sinner's power; but the Scriptures teach a different thing. They represent men by nature as spiritually bound with chains, shut up in darkness, in a prison-house. So then all their boasted 'sufficiency' of the Atonement is only an empty offer of salvation on certain terms and conditions; and such an Atonement is much too weak to meet the desperate case of a lost sinner" (Wm. Rushton). Whenever the Holy Scriptures speak of the sufficiency of redemption, they always place it in the certain efficacy of redemption. The Atonement of Christ is sufficient because it is absolutely efficacious, and because it effects the salvation of all for whom it was made. Its sufficiency lies not in affording man a possibility of salvation, but in accomplishing their salvation with invincible power. Hence the Word of God never represents the sufficiency of the Atonement as wider than the design of the Atonement. How different is the salvation of God from the ideas now popularly entertained of it! "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9:11). Christ, by His death paid the ransom, and made sin's captives His own. He has a legal right to all of the persons for whom He paid that ransom price, and therefore with God's own right arm they are brought forth. For whom did Christ die? "For the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isa. 53:8). "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14). "To make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). Here are seven passages which gave a clear and simple answer to our question, and their testimony, both singly and collectively, declare plainly that the death of Christ was not an atonement for sin abstractedly, nor a mere expression of Divine displeasure against iniquity, nor an indefinite satisfaction of Divine justice, but instead, a ransom-price paid for the eternal redemption of a certain number of sinners, and a plenary satisfaction for their particular sins. It is the glory of redemption that it does not merely render God placable and man pardonable, but that it has reconciled sinners to God, put away their sins, and forever perfected His set-apart ones. "He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (verse 51). The nature of Christ's death is here intimated in the word "for": it was in the stead of others. Christ died for "that nation," (i.e. that "holy nation," 1 Peter 2:9). Mark here the striking accuracy of Scripture. Caiaphas did not say that Christ should die for "this nation," (namely, the Jewish nation); but for "that nation." Isaiah 53 will be the confession of that "holy nation," as the beginning of Isaiah 54 plainly shows. Then shall it be said, "Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isa. 60:21). "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). Here the Holy Spirit

tells us that the scope of Christ's death also includes God's elect from among the Gentiles. As the Savior had announced on a former occasion, "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 shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd" (John 10:15, 16). Here then are the "other sheep," namely, God's elect scattered throughout the world. They are here called "the children of God" because they were such in His eternal purpose. Just as Christ said "other sheep I have," and just as God said to the Apostle, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10), so in the mind of God these were children, though "scattered abroad," when Christ died. There is a most striking correspond-ency between John 11:51, 52 and 1 John 2:2: the one explains the other. Note carefully the threefold parallelism between them. Christ died with a definite end in view, and the Father had an express purpose before Him in giving up His Son to death. That end and that purpose was that "Israel" should be redeemed, and that "the children of God," scattered abroad, should be gathered together in one—not "one body," for the Church is nowhere contemplated (corporeately) in John's writings; but one family. It shall yet be fully demonstrated that Christ did not die in vain. The prayer of our great High Priest will be fully answered: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one" (John 17:20,21). Then shall He "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (John 11:53). What a fearful climax was this to all that had gone before! Again and again we have noted the incorrigible wickedness of the Jews. Not only was He not "received" by His own, but they cast Him out. Not only was He despised and rejected by men, but they thirsted for His blood. The religious head of the Nation, the high priest, moved for His death, and the Council passed and ratified his motion. Nothing now remained but the actual execution of their awful decision. Their only consideration now was how and when His death could best be accomplished without creating a tumult among the people. No doubt they concluded that the raising of Lazarus would result in a considerable increase in the number of the Lord's followers, hence they deemed it wise to use caution in carrying out their murderous plan. "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews" (John 11:54). How quietly, with what an entire absence of parade, does the Holy Spirit introduce some of the most striking points in Scripture! How much there is in this word "therefore." It shows plainly that God would have us meditate on every jot and tittle of His matchless Word. The force of the "therefore" here is this: the Lord Jesus knew of the decision at which the Council had arrived. He knew they had decreed that He should die. It is another of the many inconspicuous proofs of His Deity, which are scattered throughout this Gospel. It witnessed to His omniscience. The Holy Spirit has shown us that He knew what took place in that Council, for He has recorded the very words that were uttered there. And now Christ shows us by His action here that He also knew. We may add that the word for "no more" signifies "not yet," or "no more at present"; "openly" signifies "publicly." "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples" (11:54). Though near at hand, His "hour" had not yet come: Christ therefore retired into a place about which nothing is now known, there to enjoy quiet fellowship with His disciples. "Like the former cases of retirement, this place is significant. Ephraim means 'fruitlessness': it is the name given to the tribes in apostasy, in the Prophets, forecasting thus what was in God's heart about them, even though they were in rebellion and ruin. Can anything exceed the grace of God, or anything but man's depravity and obduracy bring it into action and display, and be a fitting cause and occasion for all its riches and wonders! Ah they who have been met by God in that grace, are yet to meet Him in the glory of it, to know as all through the history of their sad failures they have been known. Thus we have in chapter ten the Church gathered to the Son of God, here (anticipatively) Israel; but He must die for this" (Malachi Taylor). "And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to

purify themselves" (John 11:55). Here was man's religiousness, punctilious about ceremonial ablutions, but with no heart for inward purity. The very ones who were so careful about ordinances, were, in a few days, willing to shed innocent blood! What a commentary upon human nature! According to the Mosaic law no Israelite who was ceremonially, defiled could keep the passover at the regular time, though he was allowed to keep it one month later (Num. 9:10, 11). It was to avoid this delay, that many Jews here came up to Jerusalem before the passover that they might be "purified," and hence entitled to keep it in the month Nisan. "Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?" (John 11:56). Two things gave rise to this questioning among those who had come up to Jerusalem from all sections of Palestine. Each of the two previous years Christ had been present at the Feast. In John 2:13 we read, "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." It was at this season the Lord had manifested Himself as the Vindicator of the honor of His Father's House, and a deep impression had been made on those who had witnessed it. A year later, during the course of the Feast He had fed the hungry multitude on the Mount. This so stirred the people that they wanted, by force, to make Him their king (John 6:14, 15). But now the leaders of the nation were incensed against Him. They had decreed that Jesus must die, and their decree was now public knowledge. Hence the one topic of interest among the crowds of Jews in Jerusalem was, would this miracle worker who claimed to be not only the Messiah but the Son of God, enter the danger zone, or would He be afraid to expose Himself? "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man know where he were, he should show it that they might take him" (John 11:57). Behind the edict of the Council we may discover the enmity of the Serpent working against the woman's Seed. This verse supplies the climax to the chapter, showing the full effect of the Divine testimony which had been borne in the raising of Lazarus. The resurrection-power of the Son of God had brought to a head the hatred of him who had the power of death. It is true that Christ had raised the dead on other occasions, but here He had given a public display of His mighty power on the very outskirts of Jerusalem, and this was an open affront to Satan and his earthly instruments. The glory of the Lord Jesus shone out so brightly that it seriously threatened the dominion of "the prince of this world," and consequently there was no longer a concealment of the resolution which he had moved the religious world to make—Jesus must die. But how blessed to know that the very enmity of the Devil himself is overruled by God to the outworking of His eternal purpose! 1. In whose house was the "supper" made, verse 2? Let the student give careful attention to the following questions on our next section, John 12:1-11— 2. What do verses 2 and 3 hint at about the eternal state? 3. What is intimated by Mary wiping Christ's feet with her "hair," verse 3? 4. What spiritual truth is suggested by the last clause of verse 3? 5. How many contrasts are there here between Mary and Judas? 6. What blessed truth is suggested by "Let her alone," verse 7? 7. Why were the "chief priests" so anxious to get rid of Lazarus, verse 10?

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