

# Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

## John 11:48

**v48:** It would be interesting to know who reported to John what was said in that private meeting. Nicodemus (John 3:1; 19:39-40) may have been present or at least heard from someone who was. One way or another, John is able to quote for us portions of a secret conversation. We learn that someone in that meeting warned everyone, "If we allow Him [to continue] this way all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take from us both the place and the nation" (literal). That statement reflects the fears of both groups. The high priests were afraid they would lose "the place" which in that context means they would lose the temple (Dt 12:5). For failing to control a dangerous religious movement the high priest's position might be given to someone else, or the religious activities at the temple might be shut down. And that would mean a huge loss of revenue.

## John 11:48-49

**v48** (continued): The Pharisees were afraid that the Romans would come and take away "the nation." In this context the term probably means the legal recognition that Rome had given to Judaism. Illegal religions could be openly persecuted, but legal religions were protected by law, so long as they didn't stir up civil unrest. And Judaism was a legal religion. But if Rome declared it to be illegal, synagogues would be closed, and the practice of their religion would be outlawed. To Pharisees, who focused on observing the Law of Moses, that would be devastating. **v49:** The Herods and the Roman governors had the authority to remove one high priest and appoint another whenever they felt it was necessary. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, noted that there were 28 high priests between the beginning of Herod the Great's reign and the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 20.10.5). Pontius Pilate's predecessor, Valerius Gratus, was the governor who removed Annas and then in turn set up Ismael, Eleazer (son of Annas), Simon and Joseph Caiaphas (son-in-law of Annas) (A. Plummer, St. John, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1893, p.247). Caiaphas was high priest during the trial of Jesus (Jn 18:13) and the persecution of the early church as recorded in the Book of Acts (Ac 4:6). Even though Caiaphas held the title of high priest during those years, Annas, his father-in-law, remained in charge. John mentions Caiaphas only as "a certain Caiaphas, being high priest that year" (literal).

## John 11:49-50

**vs49-50:** Caiaphas' response to the question of why they had not been able to halt Jesus' growing influence was to say, "You do not understand anything." To him the answer was obvious, and he was surprised they couldn't see it for themselves. All they had to do was to consider the facts. Either they would kill Jesus or the nation would be destroyed by the Romans. But as John notes, Caiaphas accidentally said that in a very prophetic way. He said, "It is to our advantage that one man should die for the people, and not all the nation perish" (literal). His words unintentionally expressed the principle of "substitution," which in the Bible means that someone (or some animal) endures the punishment that was due someone else. It is because of this principle that God is able to forgive sinners. Substitution satisfies the demand for justice while allowing God to be merciful.

## John 11:51-53

**v51:** For such a profound spiritual truth to come out of the mouth of this corrupt man was possible only because God chose to speak through him. He was Israel's high priest in name only, but God honored the office that he held and announced through his lips that Jesus would die for the nation. **v52:** John was deeply aware that Jesus died not only for the sins of the nation of Israel but also for the sins of non-Jews, so he added this clarifying statement for his readers: "And not for the nation only but so that He might also gather together into one the children of God who have been scattered through [the nations]" (literal). His words remind us that God's goal is to gather believing Jews and Gentiles into one new spiritual family (Eph 2:11-16; 3:1-7). **v53:** Both the groups accepted the high priest's proposal, and from that day onward they worked together on a plan to kill Jesus.

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## John 11:54

**v54:** Someone warned Him about their plot, and He quickly left the area and moved to a small city about 18 miles north. The city which John identifies as "Ephraim," may have been the ancient city of Ophrah (modern: El Tayibeh) located near Bethel, on a road leading down toward the Jordan River. In that remote place Jesus would be hidden from the pilgrims walking on the main highway toward Jerusalem for Passover. Since He had ministered before in Judea (Jn 3:22), there may have been believing families in the area who loved Him. John's statement, "And He stayed there with the disciples" (literal) is usually understood to mean that the Twelve went to that place with Him, but it could also have another meaning. John may be telling us that the disciples in that city took Jesus and the Twelve into their homes. In other words, the believers in the area gave Him refuge.

## John 11:55

**v55:** Then John says, "And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from out of the countryside, before the Passover, so that they might purify themselves" (literal). Each year preparations for Passover began about one month ahead of the feast. Everyone, men and women, were required by the Law of Moses to travel to Jerusalem for that feast, so roads, bridges and wells must be repaired; tombs must be freshly whitewashed so no one would accidentally touch a dead body, or anything or anyone who had touched a dead body (Nu 19:11-22). If someone had contacted something dead, there was a cleansing procedure they must go through before entering the temple. The procedure required a full week to complete (Nu 19:19). It involved washing their clothes and taking ritual baths (mikvah).

## John 11:55-57

**v55** (continued): Also, two weeks before Passover those who planned to present to the Lord the tithes of their flocks and herds had to select the animals (A. Edersheim, [Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah](#), E.R. Herrick & Co., New York, ca 1890, p.367; [Carta's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem](#), The Temple Institute, Jerusalem, 2005, pp.201-207). So by making the simple statement that Passover was "near," John lets us know that we are in the final two weeks before Passover when the roads of Israel were full of pilgrims, and the city of Jerusalem was swelling with people arriving for ritual purification. **vs56-57:** During those busy weeks of preparation, the conversations in the courtyards of the temple were often about Jesus. People asked one another, "What do you think? [Do you think] He won't come to the feast at all?" (paraphrase). Everyone knew Jesus was in danger. The chief priests and Pharisees had published a warrant for His arrest. The order demanded that anyone who knew where He was must report His location to the religious leaders, so they could arrest Him.