

I. Introduction

A.

II. v.47 “The Chief Priests and the Pharisees assembled a Sanhedrin, and they said, “What do we do because this Man makes many signs.”

A. What was it that pushed the religious leaders to convene a council? It was the signs that Jesus did.

1. This demonstrates that they could not deny that He performed miracles.

2. This also demonstrates that Jesus was right: they did not know the Scriptures.

3. Had they known the Scriptures, they would have concluded that Jesus did the works of God.

B. Also, from that conclusion, they would know that, like Saul who became the Apostle Paul, they were kicking against the goads: Acts 26:14 14 “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

1. What is a Sanhedrin?

C. *The Sanhedrin probably consisted of 71 members. It is true that we find this no. first only in the Mishnah (Sanh., 1, 6), but it must have applied prior to 70 a.d. as well. Acc. to Nu. 11:16 Moses gathered around him a group of 70 elders, and we read of 70 men for various other Jewish bodies. The Jewish colony in Batanaea was led by 70 chief men, Jos. Bell., 2, 482; Vit., 56. At the beginning of the Jewish War Joseph. himself appointed a council of 70 men in Galilee, Bell., 2, 570; cf. also Vit., 79. The Zealots nominated a court of 70 judges in Jerusalem, Bell., 4, 336. There was supposed to have been a council of 71 elders in Alexandria, T. Sukka 4, 6 (198). Hence the great Sanhedrin was probably an assembly of 70 or 71 councillors too.²⁰ At the head of the body, which convened in the βουλή of Jos. Bell., 5, 144 or the βουλευτήριο of 6, 354, stood the high-priest.²² He was the leader of the Jewish V 7, p 864 people; he alone could preside in the Sanhedrin. Around him were the ἀρχιερεῖς, the priestly aristocracy, Sadducean in sympathy (→ 43, 15 ff.; III, 270, 27 ff.). By virtue of their office the chief priests in the temple had a seat and voice in the Sanhedrin and they formed a solid faction. The elders were a second group, → VI, 659, 4 ff. It is true that originally all members of the γερουσία were called elders. Gradually, however, this term acquired a more restricted sense, so that only leaders of the influential lay families in Jerusalem were called πρεσβύτεροι. Without exception these patricians, too, were Sadducean in persuasion → 43, 15 ff. The Pharisees managed to get into the High Council in the days of Queen Alexandra → 862, 20 ff. From then on the power and influence of the γραμματεῖς (→ I, 740, 14 ff.) grew steadily in the Sanhedrin. In the Roman period the ἀρχιερεῖς were still first in rank, but in fact decisions could not be taken or executed without the agreement of the Pharisaic scribes.¹*

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 863–864).

D. The Sanhedrin was the ruling body over Palestine, and, in some cases, outside of Palestine.

1. Matthew 5:22 = the ascendancy of courts in the land.
 - a) Court = smaller court
 - b) Supreme Court = "Sanhedrin"
 - c) The One who can send to "fiery hell" = God.

E. The body of jurors/judges was 70. The presiding judge was the High Priest.

1. To form a Sanhedrin was to call a special council for legal reasons as it pertained to Israel.
2. It was typically because of some misdemeanor, or felony, against Torah.
3. Although they could not execute anyone, typically, they could get very close.
4. They even had tremendous sway over Rome to "push" for an execution.

F. *At the head of the body, which convened in the βουλή of Jos. Bell., 5, 144 or the βουλευτήριον of 6, 354, stood the high-priest.²² He was the leader of the Jewish V 7, p 864 people; he alone could preside in the Sanhedrin. Around him were the ἀρχιερεῖς, the priestly aristocracy, Sadducean in sympathy (→ 43, 15 ff.; III, 270, 27 ff.). By virtue of their office the chief priests in the temple had a seat and voice in the Sanhedrin and they formed a solid faction. The elders were a second group, → VI, 659, 4 ff. It is true that originally all members of the γερουσία were called elders. Gradually, however, this term acquired a more restricted sense, so that only leaders of the influential lay families in Jerusalem were called πρεσβύτεροι. Without exception these patricians, too, were Sadducean in persuasion → 43, 15 ff. The Pharisees managed to get into the High Council in the days of Queen Alexandra → 862, 20 ff. From then on the power and influence of the γραμματεῖς (→ I, 740, 14 ff.) grew steadily in the Sanhedrin. In the Roman period the ἀρχιερεῖς were still first in rank, but in fact decisions could not be taken or executed without the agreement of the Pharisaic scribes²*

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| <p>G. Therefore, what we see here is a formal act on the part of the Jews to begin formal proceedings against Jesus...without Him present, without accusation, without cause.</p> |
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1. This will culminate into His actual betrayal and execution.
2. It is beginning to get very intense in Jerusalem.

III. v. 48 "If ever we permit Him in this manner, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and remove even our place and the nation!"

A. This shows the concern of the Sanhedrin.

1. In this council, the Chief Priest is sitting, listening.
2. The judges are deliberating their concerns.
3. This is a very heated and argumentative group with a very serious problem on their hands: How to keep their nation together.

B. In one sense, this is a valid concern.

² *ibid*

1. The politics at play in the Roman Empire, especially as it relates to the Jews and their land, were enormous and complex.
 2. The bottom line is that the policy of Rome was to allow certain lands to remain a mixture of their own laws and Roman occupation.
 - a) Therefore, you can see a ruling body of Jews exist in the government of Pilate, Herod, Agrippa, Felix, etc...
 - b) Especially as it related to religious things, the Romans usually left people to their own matters.
- C. The intensity of the Jews' selfish religion is beginning to be seen here.
1. John wants us to know the real reason behind Jesus' death-rebellion against God.
 2. The history of the Jews up to this point is one of desperate work to regain nationhood.
 3. For them to throw that away because of this one Man's miracles was unthinkable.
- D. This is where nationalism will steer you wrong.
- Romans 10:1–3 **1** Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. **2** For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. **3** For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.
- E. Paul is saying exactly what is happening here.
1. The leaders of Jesus' day were desperate for God.
 2. The leaders of Jesus' day were desperate for righteousness.
 3. The leaders of Jesus' day were desperate for unity.
 4. But only as it relates to themselves.
 - a) The entire system was an insurance for their own livelihood.
 - b) This is what they wanted to keep.
- F. Remember, Jesus started His ministry assaulting the temple money system.
1. For 3 years now He has gradually built up a following that is challenging the system still.
 2. Therefore, the Jews have had enough.
- G. If the people rebel against Rome, Rome will not even think twice about entering their nation and wiping away the ruling body and replacing it, fully, with their own.

IV. v. 49 “Caiaphas, being Chief Priest that year, someone from among them, said to them, “You do not know anything.”

- A. Caiaphas was the Chief Priest that year.
1. The Chief Priest was made such by money and position.
 2. Caiaphas was Chief Priest solely because he was son-in-law to Annas, the mob-boss grandfather of the entire dark priesthood.
 - a) *Remember that it was against Annas that Jesus first came to the Temple in His ministry.*
 - b) *It was also against Annas that Jesus would come again, disturbing the racketeering of the High Priesthood and Pharisees overseen by Annas.*
 - c) *In reality, Caiaphas did nothing of his own will.*

John 18:12–13 **12** So the *Roman* cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, **13** and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

- B. With his father-in-law behind him, Caiaphas stands up to the Sanhedrin

v. v. 50 “Do you not reckon/realize that it is advantageous to you all in order that one man dies on behalf of the people, and the whole nation to not be destroyed?”

VI. v. 51 “This he did not say from himself, but rather, being High Priest that year, he prophesied, that Jesus was about to be destroyed on behalf of the people.”

- A. Caiaphas seems to be being used of God to say what would happen to Jesus.
 B. However, there is more to it than that.

John 18:14 **14** Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

1. John tells us that what Caiaphas meant was that the death of Christ was a sure way to maintain the nation's standing with Rome.

2. *What Caiaphas has in mind is the giving of Jesus to death to keep the nation from perishing at the hands of the Romans.*³

C. Caiaphas, acting in the place of Annas, made mention that the work of the Messiah is clearly to gather God's people into one.

1. Therefore, what the Sanhedrin must do is to thwart that effort.
2. The only way to do this was the death of the perpetrator.

II. v. 52 "And not only on behalf of the nation only, but also in order that the children of God, scattered around, he would gather together into one."

A. Caiaphas knew, from Jesus' own teaching, that Jesus wanted to gather the people together into one nation.

1. The leaders could not have this.
2. It would mean certain exposure of their own ways and the contradiction of them by the ways of Jesus and His followers.

B. Remember, the nations rage against Messiah.

1. The chief instigator of this rebellion will be, until their repentance, the Jews and the city of Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:37–39 **37** "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. **38** "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! **39** "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" "

a) Revelation 17:3-18

- b) Thus, this statement is not compliance to Jesus.
- c) It is clarity as to Jesus' mission and the dismissal of it.

C. The best way to thwart Jesus' mission is to kill Him and deal with the aftermath.

1. But, at least Rome will have been used to that.
2. It is better than the removal of the entire priesthood and

1. ³ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Jn 11:50.

leadership of Israel.