

Why Would Anyone Want to Kill Jesus?

Message 1 of 3 in the series "Investigating Easter"

A. The death of Jesus' friend Lazarus gives us clear insight into what Jesus came to do.

"A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha... So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, 'Lord, your dear friend is very sick.' But when Jesus heard about it he said, 'Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.' So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days. Finally, he said to his disciples, 'Let's go back to Judea.'... 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.' The disciples said, 'Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!' They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. So he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him.'" John 11:1-15 (NLT)

1. Jesus allowed Lazarus to die in order to help people believe.

"...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31 (NIV)

a. Jesus wanted Mary, Martha, and His disciples to believe that He is the Messiah, sent from God to save the world.

"When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days... When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him... Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.' Jesus told her, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'Yes,' Martha said, 'he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.' Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?' 'Yes, Lord,' she told him. 'I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.'" John 11:17-27 (NLT)

b. Jesus wanted everyone gathered at Lazarus' tomb to believe that He is stronger than death and the grave.

"'Where have you put him?' he asked them. They told him, 'Lord, come and see.' Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, 'See how much he loved him!' But some said, 'This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?' Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. 'Roll the stone aside,' Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, 'Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.' Jesus responded, 'Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?' So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.' Then Jesus shouted, 'Lazarus, come out!' And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, 'Unwrap him and let him go!'" John 11:34-44 (NLT)

2. As a result of Lazarus' resurrection, many people believed in Jesus.

"Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done." John 11:45-46 (NLT)

"...they won't be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." Luke 16:31b (NLT)

Life Application: It is vital that I believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16 (NRSV)

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NLT)

B. The religious leaders' reaction to Lazarus' resurrection gives us clear insight into why they wanted Jesus dead.

"Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.' And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.' Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death... the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus." John 11:47-53,12:10-11 (NKJV)

1. The religious leaders wrongly thought that their religious traditions and political power were more valuable than a personal relationship with Jesus.

"You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 'These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'" Mark 7:6 (NLT) (see also Isaiah 29:13)

2. The religious leaders rightly understood that following Jesus means surrendering everything to Him.

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?"

Luke 9:23-25 (NLT)

3. Ironically, Caiaphas unintentionally prophesied that Jesus needed to die for the good of people everywhere.

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read John 11:1-53 and then answer the following questions:

1. With which character in this story can you most identify?
 - The disciples needed to strengthen their faith in Jesus.
 - Lazarus received new life from Jesus.
 - Mary and Martha had their beliefs challenged by Jesus.
 - The Priests and Pharisees stubbornly refused to believe in Jesus.
2. Share about a time in your life when you experienced deep grief over losing someone you loved. Have you ever questioned God asking why He allows so much pain and suffering?
3. Why do you think it was so important to Jesus that His disciples see Him raise Lazarus from the dead? (Hint: Lazarus' body had been sealed in a rolling-stone tomb for multiple days when Jesus arrived.) How does it make you feel to learn that God planned all of this?
4. Read John 3:16, 20:30-31. At Centerpoint we often say, "God doesn't have grandchildren. He only has children." What does this mean to you?
5. Does it seem strange to you that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead "many" but not "all" of the people who witnessed this miracle believed in Him? (See Luke 16:27-31)
6. Why do you think the chief priests and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus? (See Matthew 23)
7. Read Luke 9:23-25. What do we need to surrender in order to follow Jesus fully? Spend some time as a group praying about these things.