

INTERPRETING CAIAPHAS'S "PROPHECY" OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH



FRANK F. JUDD JR.

In December of 1990, bulldozers were clearing land in the Peace Forest just south of Jerusalem in an effort to make way for a water park. While excavating the site, workers uncovered an ancient tomb and immediately called the Israel Antiquities Authority to investigate. Within the tomb, archaeologists discovered several ossuaries, including two ossuaries that were each inscribed with a form of the name Caiaphas, a name well known from the New Testament Gospels as the high priest during the time of the Savior's trial and Crucifixion.¹ Because of the proximity of the tomb to Jerusalem and the noteworthiness of the name, the discovery of these inscriptions has caused some scholars to suggest that this tomb once belonged to the family of that famous high priest.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the given name of Caiaphas was Joseph.² In the tomb, one of the ossuaries was inscribed with the name "Joseph bar Caiaphas."³ The Aramaic word *bar* literally means "son of" but often carries the meaning "descendant of" or "from the

family of.” Since Caiaphas was the family name, the inscription “Joseph bar Caiaphas” is the same name as Joseph Caiaphas.⁴ Scientific studies of the bones found in this ossuary have concluded that they belonged to a sixty-year-old male.⁵ It is possible, at least, that this ossuary contained the bones of the same Caiaphas who was the high priest at the time of the death of Jesus Christ.⁶

In the Gospel accounts, Caiaphas is generally presented in a negative light as someone who was instrumental in facilitating the Crucifixion of Jesus.⁷ Yet in the Gospel of John, Caiaphas seems to utter a “prophecy” about the death of Jesus and its salvific effects. John⁸ concludes that Caiaphas “prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:51–52). What are we to make of this “prophecy”? Why would or how could Caiaphas, who is presented in the Gospels as an unrighteous man, prophesy about the redemptive death of Jesus and then immediately conspire “to put him to death” (John 11:53)? In this chapter, I will examine this important issue. I will demonstrate that Caiaphas’s declaration concerning the death of Jesus was, in its original context, merely a political statement made by the Jewish high priest. I will also show that it was John who applied the high priest’s statement to the Savior’s Atonement—something that Caiaphas did not intend when he uttered those words.

The Priesthood of Levi and the Office of High Priest

When the Israelites escaped from the yoke of Pharaoh and slavery in Egypt, the Lord Jehovah gave them an opportunity to accept the fulness of the priesthood and the gospel.⁹ The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews taught concerning the children of Israel: “For unto us was the gospel preached, as

well as unto them” (Hebrews 4:2). Unfortunately, the Israelites rebelled and forfeited that privilege. The Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith in a revelation that “Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness” concerning this higher law “and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; but they hardened their hearts” (D&C 84:23–24). As a consequence of the disobedience of the children of Israel, the Lord “took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also; and the lesser priesthood continued,” which administered “the law of carnal commandments” (D&C 84:25–27).¹⁰ The primary function of this lower priesthood was to administer the affairs and ordinances associated with the tabernacle—later the Temple of Solomon and the Temple of Herod—and was to be held only by males from the tribe of Levi (see Numbers 1:50–53; D&C 84:26–27).

Concerning those who were authorized to perform the duties associated with this lower, or Levitical, priesthood, the law of Moses discusses Levites, priests, and the high priest. Levites were males who descended from Levi, and their duties consisted primarily of assisting the priests and of keeping the temple clean and orderly.¹¹ Priests were males who descended from Moses’s brother Aaron,¹² and their duties were to offer animal sacrifices and teach the people according to the law of Moses.¹³ There was only one high priest at a time, and he was the firstborn male descendant of Aaron who functioned as the presiding official within the Levitical Priesthood.¹⁴ It is important to remember that the Levitical Priesthood was not conferred on an individual because of his personal righteousness but simply by virtue of his lineage. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews explained: “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). It is also noteworthy to understand that

by the time of the Savior, the high priest was appointed by the ruling Roman authority and not because of a firstborn status or a direct descent from Aaron.¹⁵ According to Josephus, Caiaphas, who was not the son of the previous high priest (see John 18:13), was appointed high priest in AD 18 by the Roman governor Valerius Gratus, predecessor to Pontius Pilate.¹⁶

Caiaphas the High Priest

Little is known concerning the life of Caiaphas.¹⁷ According to Josephus, in AD 6 the Syrian legate Quirinius appointed a high priest by the name of Ananus.¹⁸ This Ananus is likely the high priest Annas mentioned in the New Testament.¹⁹ Concerning the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas, the Gospel of John states: “Annas . . . was father in law to Caiaphas” (John 18:13). Rather than waiting until the death of Annas to appoint a successor, the Roman governor Valerius Gratus deposed Annas in AD 15 and appointed Annas’s son Eleazar, who according to Josephus had already served as high priest once before.²⁰ Eventually, after deposing and appointing another high priest, Valerius Gratus appointed Joseph Caiaphas as high priest in AD 18.

As the high priest, Caiaphas was the presiding authority in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, and was also likely a member of the Sadducees, a Jewish religious denomination.²¹ The Sanhedrin consisted of approximately seventy educated Jewish men²² and was the highest judicial court with respect to Jewish matters for Jews living within Palestine.²³ The Sadducees were a sect of Jews whose members were primarily from wealthy priestly aristocratic families and who did not emphasize supernatural beliefs such as angels, demons, life after death, the Resurrection, or predeterminism.²⁴

The Setting for Caiaphas's Statement

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught a very important approach to help Latter-day Saints understand scriptural passages. He declared: "I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer?"²⁵ Applying this method to the issue of Caiaphas's statement we should ask, what was the context which caused Caiaphas to utter those famous words about the death of Jesus? An analysis of the events immediately preceding Caiaphas's statement sets the stage for understanding the true nature of the high priest's declaration.

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were siblings who lived in the village of Bethany, a few miles east of Jerusalem, and Jesus loved them. While Jesus was in Galilee with His disciples, He heard that His beloved friend Lazarus was sick. Rather than leaving immediately to visit Lazarus in Bethany, the Savior waited two more days in Galilee. When He finally made the two-day journey to Bethany, "he found that [Lazarus] had lain in the grave four days already" (John 11:17; see also vv. 1, 3, 5–6).

It seems that the Savior's delay in traveling to Lazarus was by design. When Jesus discussed Lazarus's death with His disciples, He admitted, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, *to the intent that ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him*" (John 11:14–15; emphasis added). The Savior's statement seems to indicate that He deliberately waited in Galilee with the express intent of creating a teaching moment. The Gospel of John curiously draws attention to the fact that Jesus waited two days in Galilee and that when He arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days (see John 11:6, 17, 39).

Certainly, each additional day that Lazarus's body lay in the grave would have added to the force of the testimony of

the Savior when He called Lazarus forth. If Jesus had arrived in Bethany immediately following Lazarus's death and then Lazarus had come forth from the tomb alive, some of the Savior's critics may have concluded that it was not a miracle. But because four days had passed since Lazarus died, the conclusion was inescapable: Jesus had miraculously raised Lazarus from the dead.²⁶

When Jesus instructed those who were mourning Lazarus to remove the stone covering the tomb, Lazarus's sister Mary said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39). The raising of Lazarus from the dead was truly evidence to the disciples and the other onlookers that Jesus was indeed "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).²⁷ The raising of Lazarus, however, was also evidence for the enemies of the Savior—including Caiaphas—who did not witness but heard about Jesus's miracle and knew that Lazarus was alive once again.

The Reaction to the Raising of Lazarus

The Gospel of John states that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, "many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him" (John 11:45). But not everyone believed. Of those who saw the miracle, "some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done" (John 11:46). As a result the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to discuss Jesus, saying, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles" (John 11:47).²⁸

The news of Lazarus being raised from the dead spread through Jerusalem. Lazarus was now living proof that Jesus was indeed approved of God. During an earlier trip to Jerusalem when Jesus had healed a blind man, some of the Pharisees had concluded: "We know that God heareth not

sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. . . . If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (John 9:31, 33).²⁹ As long as Lazarus was alive, therefore, his mere existence would be incontrovertible evidence to the populace that the power of God was upon Jesus. Lazarus became somewhat of a local attraction for curious people who wanted to see the man who had come back from the dead. When Jesus later visited the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, “much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’s sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead” (John 12:9).

The crux of the matter for the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem was the growing number of people who were now following Jesus, which was directly related to the miracle with Lazarus. The Gospel of John concludes that “because that by reason of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus” (John 12:11). The Savior’s sudden rise in popularity and potential power was of great concern to those in the Sanhedrin. Thus, as a result of the raising of Lazarus, the Jewish leaders not only plotted to kill Jesus Himself but also sought to silence Lazarus (see John 11:53; 12:10).

When the Sanhedrin gathered together to discuss what they should do concerning Jesus, they reasoned: “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). In other words, if Jesus were allowed to continue gathering followers, He may cause a riot in Jerusalem against the Jewish leadership, which in turn would lead to serious consequences against the temple and the Jews in Jerusalem. Underlying this statement is the fact that other Jewish charismatics had caused, and would yet cause, significant problems in the eyes of the Romans. For example, the Jewish historian Josephus

mentions that in AD 6, a man known as Judas the Galilean had incited other Jews to revolt against the local Roman government, refusing to pay taxes.³⁰ According to the New Testament, Judas of Galilee “drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed” (Acts 5:37).

The members of the Sanhedrin knew that Jesus had the potential to cause problems similar to those of other charismatic leaders like Judas of Galilee. Jesus had already publicly taught negative things about the Jewish leaders. For example, when the Savior referred to Himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:14), He had also referred to the Jewish leaders as “strangers” whom the sheep should not follow (John 10:5). The Savior’s teachings about the good shepherd utilized imagery from the book of Ezekiel: “Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? . . . The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, . . . but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. . . . I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them” (Ezekiel 34:2, 4, 23–24).

The symbols that Jesus employed in His teachings concerning the good shepherd certainly would not have been lost on the people or the Jewish leaders.³¹ Jesus was declaring himself to be the Messiah, the Davidic servant prophesied by Ezekiel who would tenderly lead the people of the Lord. The Jewish leaders, on the other hand, were cast as the irresponsible shepherds of Israel who should have, but did not, feed the flock of God. Naturally, the Jewish leaders became increasingly nervous as Jesus gained popularity and

taught His rapidly expanding number of followers not to give heed to the direction of the Sanhedrin.

Interpreting Caiaphas's Prophecy

After the Sanhedrin deliberated what to do about Jesus, Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke up: "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 11:50). What are we to make of this interesting statement? Is this actually a prophecy of the imminent atoning sacrifice of the Savior? If so, how could a wicked man such as Caiaphas utter such a prophecy? Or is there another way to understand this expression?

John concludes that Caiaphas indeed "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11:51). John further explains how Caiaphas was able to utter these prophetic words about Jesus, implying that Caiaphas did not actually speak these words of his own volition: "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied" (John 11:51). The Jewish historian Josephus mentions traditions that say the high priest acquired the gift of prophecy simply because of his position in the priesthood.³² In light of this, some Latter-day Saint commentators have discussed possible meanings of this verse, reasoning that God spoke through the holy priesthood office rather than the unholy man. James E. Talmage concluded that "the spirit of prophecy" came upon Caiaphas, not because of any worthiness on his part but "by virtue of his office" as high priest.³³ Elder Bruce R. McConkie similarly explained that despite Caiaphas's wicked intent, "he held the office of high priest, and as such he had a commission to speak for God to the people, which he then, unwittingly, did."³⁴

The important issue is that whatever else Caiaphas's statement may imply, a prophecy of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior is not what the high priest himself intended. In other words, Caiaphas's words held additional significance for Christians that were originally unintended by the high priest. John seems to make this clear in his own explanation concerning the high priest's words. After stating that Caiaphas "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation," John explains that Caiaphas's statement had even further meaning: "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51–52). It is important to point out that this last statement—applying the death of Jesus not only to the Jews, but to other nations—is better interpreted as an editorial comment and not the words of Caiaphas himself. In the end, the high priest only stated that Jesus "should die for the people" (John 11:50). But Christians like John looked at the statement in hindsight and detected further meaning that applies to the Atonement.

What then did Caiaphas intend? As discussed above, the setting indicates that Caiaphas and the other members of the Sanhedrin were primarily concerned about the possibility of a riot resulting from Jesus's ever increasing popularity as well as His potentially volatile teachings against the Jewish leaders. A riot might cause the Romans to shut down the temple, which could negatively affect Jews all across the Roman Empire.³⁵ The reasoning of the council concerning the situation was: "If we leave 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). In response, Caiaphas exclaimed, "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).³⁶ Caiaphas was concerned

with political expediency, not with justice.³⁷ If the death of one potential troublemaker prevented the wrath of the Roman army upon the temple and the Jewish people, it was a necessary evil. Further, because Caiaphas was the high priest, the loss of the temple—a very profitable enterprise because of the constant receipt of tithes and offerings—would have been financially devastating to him and many other members of the Sadducee-dominated Sanhedrin. The high priest’s own words reveal his true motive—to save himself from political and financial ruin.

Conclusion

When Nephi was struggling with the commandment from the Lord to cut off the head of Laban, the Spirit declared to him: “It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Nephi 4:13).³⁸ The similarities between this declaration and Caiaphas’s statement are more apparent than real. The direction given to Nephi was based upon a law given by the Lord Jehovah to His “ancient prophets” (D&C 98:32).³⁹ The law was that if their “standard of peace” was rejected multiple times, the Lord “would give unto them a commandment and justify them in going out to battle against that nation, tongue, or people” (D&C 98:34, 36). In such cases, as the Lord said, “I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands” (D&C 98:29; see also D&C 98:31).

The sons of Lehi had peacefully sought to obtain the brass plates and even offered to pay Laban generously for them (see 1 Nephi 4:11–12, 22–24). But rather than discussing the issue with Laman, Laban responded in anger, accusing Laman of robbery and threatening to kill him (see 1 Nephi 4:13–14). When the sons of Lehi presented to him riches in exchange for the brass plates, Laban ordered his servants to kill them so that Laban might seize their property (see 1 Nephi 4:24–26).

Because Laban had rejected multiple attempts by the sons of Lehi to peacefully negotiate for possession of the brass plates and also because he sought to kill them, the Lord gave a commandment to Nephi justifying his actions against Laban. The Spirit clearly declared to Nephi: “The Lord hath delivered him into thy hands” (1 Nephi 4:12).

The declaration of the Spirit to Nephi was fundamentally different from Caiaphas’s statement. Nephi understood that his family and his descendants would need the brass plates that they might keep the ordinances and sacrifices contained in the law of Moses (see 1 Nephi 15–17). Nephi’s whole focus was obedience to the commandments of God. The words of Caiaphas, on the other hand, had little to do with righteous desires. He may have unwittingly made statements about the Savior that had deeper meaning in Christian hindsight. But in reality, his “prophecy” was a selfish attempt to protect his own interests and silence the Savior. Like the high priest’s tomb, the riches and political stability coveted by Caiaphas have since been buried deep in the layers of history. But the cause for which the Savior died continues to revolutionize, enrich, and redeem the world.

Notes

Frank F. Judd Jr. is an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

1. For good summaries of the discovery of this tomb, see Zvi Greenhut’s articles “Discovery of the Caiaphas Family Tomb,” *Jerusalem Perspective* 4 (July/October 1991): 6–11; “Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (September/October 1991): 28–36; and “The Caiaphas Tomb in North Talpiyot, Jerusalem,” in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 219–22.

2. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2 and 18.4.3. For a convenient English translation, see Paul L. Maier, trans., *Josephus: The Essential Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994).

3. See the studies of Ronny Reich: “Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18/5 (1992): 38–44; and “Ossuary Inscriptions of the Caiaphas Family from Jerusalem,” in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, 223–25.

4. See David Flusser, “. . . To Bury Caiaphas, Not to Praise Him,” *Jerusalem Perspective* 4 (July/October 1991): 27; and Reich, “Caiaphas Name Inscribe on Bone Boxes,” 41.

5. See Joe Zias, “Human Skeletal Remains from the ‘Caiaphas’ Tomb,” *Atiqot* 21 (1992): 78–80. Zias’s article is written in Hebrew, and his conclusions are cited in William Horbury, “The ‘Caiaphas’ Ossuaries and Joseph Caiaphas,” in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 126 (1994): 34.

6. See William R. Domeris and Simon M. S. Long, “The Recently Excavated Tomb of Joseph Bar Caipha and the Biblical Caiaphas,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 89 (1994): 50–58; and Horbury, “The ‘Caiaphas’ Ossuaries and Joseph Caiaphas,” 32–48.

7. See David Flusser, “Caiaphas in the New Testament,” *Atiqot* 21 (1992): 81–87.

8. The narrator is either John himself or the editor(s) of John’s Gospel. For convenience, I will simply refer to the narrator as John. On the complexity of the authorship of the Gospel of John, see Frank F. Judd Jr., “Who Really Wrote the Gospels? A Study of Traditional Authorship,” in *How the New Testament Came to Be*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 132–34.

9. Latter-day Saints understand that Jehovah was the premortal Savior Jesus Christ (see John 8:58–59 and 3 Nephi 15:4–6).

10. See also the Joseph Smith Translation of Exodus 34:1–2. After Moses broke the first set of tablets, which contained the fullness of the gospel, the Lord declared to Moses: “Hew thee two

other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first [set of tablets], for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them. . . . But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment” (Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2).

11. See Numbers 3:5–10; 18:1–7; see also Merlin D. Rehm, “Levites and Priests,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Friedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:297–310.

12. Moses and Aaron were from the tribe of Levi (see Exodus 2:1–10).

13. See Numbers 18:2–7; Leviticus 10:10–11; see also Rehm, “Levites and Priests,” 4:297–310.

14. See Exodus 28:6–42; Leviticus 6:19–23; see also Lawrence H. Shiffman, “Priests,” in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier, rev. ed. (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 880–82.

15. See James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 394–490.

16. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2.

17. For a nice summary, see VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, 426–36; and Bruce Chilton, “Caiaphas,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:803–6.

18. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.1.

19. See John 18:13 and Acts 4:6. For information on the high priest Annas, see VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, 420–26; Bruce Chilton, “Annas,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:257–58.

20. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2.

21. See Acts 5:17–21; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1. By the time of the Savior, the Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin, although there were a few Pharisees in the council. See, for example,

Nicodemus in John 3:1 and Gamaliel in Acts 5:34. In general, see VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, 394–490.

22. See Exodus 24:16–25. Josephus mentions that the Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one members (see Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.10.5).

23. See Anthony J. Saldarini, “Sanhedrin,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:975–80.

24. See Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.8.14 and Acts 23:8; see also Gary G. Porton, “Sadducees,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:892–95.

25. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 276.

26. There exist later Jewish traditions referring to a belief that after death the spirit of the deceased remained near the body for three days, hoping to return to life with the body, but on the fourth day the spirit departed permanently. Such a belief may lay behind the reference to Lazarus being dead for “four days” (John 11:17, 39). For references to this tradition, see George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1999), 189–90; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 242–43, 253n5; and Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1937–66), 5:78. Concerning the significance of the four days, Elder Russell M. Nelson taught: “There is great significance to the four-day interval between the death of Lazarus and his being called forth alive from the tomb. A portion of that significance was that, according to some Jewish traditions, it took four days before the Spirit finally and irrevocably departed from the body of the deceased person, so that decomposition could then proceed. The Master, in order to demonstrate His total power over death and His control over life, knowingly waited until that four-day interval had elapsed. Then He raised Lazarus from the dead!” (Russell M. Nelson, “Why this Holy Land?” *Ensign*, December 1989, 16–17). President Ezra Taft Benson also taught: “It was a custom among the Jews to bury their deceased on the same day they died. It

was also a superstition among them that the spirit lingered around the body for three days, but on the fourth day, it departed. Jesus was very familiar with their beliefs. He therefore delayed His arrival in Bethany until Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. In that way there would be no question about the miracle He was to perform” (Ezra Taft Benson, “Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” *New Era*, December 1980, 46–47).

27. The raising of Lazarus was technically not a resurrection. Jesus Christ was the first person to be resurrected. After Lazarus was raised from the dead, he would eventually die again and need to be resurrected just like everyone else. As President James E. Faust taught, “Jesus, having been crucified and buried in a tomb, had come back to earth as a glorified being. . . . This was a different experience than the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the young man of Nain . . . , or Lazarus. . . . They all died again. Jesus, however, became a resurrected being. He would never die again” (James E. Faust, “The Supernal Gift of the Atonement,” *Ensign*, November 1988, 13–14).

28. As stated above, the Sadducees were not normally worried about supernatural beliefs like miracles. But, as I will show below, the concern with Jesus’s miracles was more of a political issue than anything else (see John 11:48).

29. The Nephites felt similarly about this issue: “[Nephi] was a just man who did keep the record—for he truly did many miracles in the name of Jesus; and there was not any man who could do a miracle in the name of Jesus save he were cleansed every whit from his iniquity” (3 Nephi 8:1).

30. See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.5.2. Later, around AD 44–46, a charismatic man named Theudas convinced a large number of people to follow him to the Jordan River and promised that he would miraculously part the water. Upon hearing about Theudas’s plot and the large number of people gathering, the Roman governor sent soldiers and killed many of the people, including Theudas (see Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 20.5.1; Acts 5:36).

31. Elder Delbert L. Stapley taught: “Jesus knew His hearers were acquainted with the prophecy that a shepherd had been promised the children of Israel. David, the shepherd boy who became king, wrote the beautiful Twenty-third Psalm that begins: ‘The Lord is my shepherd.’ Isaiah prophesied that when God would come down, ‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm’ (Isaiah 40:11). There was no mistaking what Jesus meant. He was their Lord—the promised Messiah!” (see Delbert L. Stapley, “What Constitutes the True Church,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 22).

32. See, for example, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 6.6.3; 11.8.5; 13.10.3.

33. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 498.

34. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979–81), 3:282; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–72), 1:534–35.

35. It is noteworthy that the Sanhedrin was concerned the Romans would take away the temple, not destroy it (see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 196). Ironically, although the Sanhedrin was instrumental in putting Jesus to death, the temple was destroyed anyway, just as Jesus prophesied (see, for example, Matthew 24:1–2; 26:61; Mark 13:1–2; 14:58).

36. Some Jewish traditions about the worth of a group over that of an individual may also lie behind Caiaphas’s statement. For ancient Jewish references, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 196–97.

37. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966–70), 1:442.

38. Compare Alma’s conclusion when Korihor asked for a sign: “It is better that thy soul should be lost than that thou shouldst be the means to bringing many souls down to destruction” (Alma 30:47).

39. For further discussion of this topic, see Monte S. Nyman, *I, Nephi, Wrote This Record* (Orem, UT: Granite Publishing, 2003), 65–68; and Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92), 1:43–44.