

Jesus Before Annas and Caiaphas (John 18:12-27)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background and Recap of Preceding Events from Gospel of John

- a. As we resume in the text, it is the Thursday night, the night before Jesus is to be crucified.
- b. He has just given his Farewell Discourse to the apostles.
- c. After going to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, he is betrayed by Judas, who is leading an armed band, representing the high priests, Pharisees and other religious leaders.
- d. Jesus is concerned for his disciples; and sees to it that He alone is taken captive.
- e. He is taken first to the Jewish religious authorities: first to Annas, then to Caiaphas (the high priest); and then to Pilate, the Roman governor.

II. Jesus Brought First to Annas, then to Caiaphas, for Questioning (Read John 18:12-27)

- a. Summary of the events, from the text:
 - i. Jesus is taken bound, to Annas first and then to Caiaphas.
 1. Annas was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.
 - ii. Peter follows, along with another disciple.
 1. The “other disciple” knows the high priest, and is able to enter the courtyard of the high priest.
 2. The other disciple speaks to the woman servant guarding the door to the courtyard; and arranges for Peter to enter.
 - iii. The servant girl recognizes Peter as being a disciple of Jesus, and asks him about that.
 1. Peter denies knowing Jesus (first denial).
 - iv. Jesus is questioned by Annas (who is referred to as “high priest”) about his disciples and His *doctrine* (= His *teaching*).

1. Jesus states that He taught everything openly; and said nothing in secret. He directs Annas to ask others what He taught.
 2. For this response, Jesus receives a slap from an officer, based on a claim of showing disrespect to the high priest.
 3. Jesus challenges the person who slapped Him, asking the person to explain what He did wrong; otherwise, why did the man slap Him?
- v. Annas has Jesus bound and sent to his son-in-law Caiaphas, who is also referred to as being the high priest, for further questioning.
- vi. Two more times Peter, when challenged, denies that he knows Jesus.
1. One of those who challenged Peter was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off.
 2. Immediately after the third denial the rooster crows, just as Jesus had foretold. (**John 13:37-38**)

b. Background and importance of Annas and Caiaphas

- i. **Question:** Why does it first speak of Caiaphas as high priest, and then refer to Annas as high priest, also? Wasn't there *only one* high priest, or were there *two*?
- ii. The first mention of Annas and Caiaphas is in the beginning of Luke, when it establishes the time of the ministry of John the Baptist.
 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." (**Luke 3:1-2, NKJV**)
- iii. There were two Roman Emperors during the lifetime of Jesus.
 1. Caesar Augustus (Octavius), adopted son of Julius Caesar and generally considered to be first emperor of the Roman Empire, ruled 31 or 27 BC – 14 AD. Therefore, he was ruling at the time when Jesus was born.
 - a. His official (Latin) name/title: Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus
 - b. Translation: Emperor Caesar, son of a god (or son of the deified one; after Julius Caesar, his adopted father, who

was proclaimed a god after his death by the Roman senate), the venerable one.

- c. The word “Augustus” which means majestic or venerable, was added to his title, but became associated with his name thereafter (and from which we get the name of our month, August).
 - d. I find it ironic that during the reign of the first and greatest (by reputation) Roman Emperor, who assumes in his title “son of a god”, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
 - i. Jesus, the king over God’s kingdom and the true Son of the Living God was born in the outskirts of the Roman empire.
2. Tiberius Caesar, the second emperor and a (step)son of Augustus, ruled 14 AD – 37 AD. Therefore, he was ruling at the time when Jesus was crucified.
- a. Recall that the Sea of Galilee also was called the Sea of Tiberias (renamed after the emperor).
 - i. “After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.” (**John 6:1**, NKJV)
 - b. Also, the New Testament also speaks of a city called *Tiberias*, on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, near the place where Jesus had miraculously fed the 5,000 with bread.
 - i. “On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—” (**John 6:22-23**, NKJV)
 - c. Josephus said this city was created by Herod; and was named by him in honor of the Roman emperor Tiberias.
 - i. “And now Herod the tetrarch, who was in great favor with Tiberius, built a city of the same name with him, and called it Tiberias. He built it in the

best part of Galilee, at the lake of Gennesareth
(from **Luke 5:1** = *Sea of Galilee*).”

- ii. (Source: Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, volume 18, chapter 3)
- iv. Several times I have been asked by unbelievers who are starting to read the Bible, questions such as:
 1. **Question:** “How do we know that these accounts in the New Testament are true? Is there anything evidence in independent historical accounts to confirm the people and events mentioned in the Bible?”
 2. **Answer:** Yes, actually there is. We will discuss one great example of this, from the works of Jewish historian Josephus. He lived in Galilee shortly after the time of Jesus, and wrote a multi-volume work, *Antiquities of the Jews*, for the benefit of the Romans.
 3. While many listening to this may not care much about independent historical accounts that confirm the New Testament, this will be of interest to some truth-seekers. Also, some day you may run into someone who is looking for evidence to confirm the historical accuracy of the New Testament accounts; so I want you to have access to this information should you ever need it to help someone else.
- v. Flavius Josephus was a Galilean who switched sides in the great war between Rome and the Jews, the war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
- vi. Josephus wrote *Antiquities of the Jews*, a history of the Jewish people. In volumes 18 and 20 Josephus’ account discusses several important figures also mentioned in the New Testament. This includes Herod, as well as John the Baptist, Jesus, James the brother of Jesus, Philip, Pontius Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas.
 1. The most famous passage, regarding Jesus:
 - a. “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to

them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, book 18, chapter 3)

2. Some modern scholars have questioned whether this reference to Jesus by Josephus, a Jew, might have been added to the document sometime later, by Christians.
 - a. However, this passage from Josephus was quoted by Eusebius, the early Christian writer (writing in the early 300’s) in three of his writings.
 - b. In a powerful apologetic work written to convince unbelievers (including Jews), *Proof of the Gospel*, book 3, Eusebius points back to the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus as providing evidence to support the claims of the Christians:
 - i. “And here it will not be inappropriate for me to make use of the evidence of the Hebrew Josephus as well, who in the eighteenth chapter of *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in his record of the times of Pilate, mentions our Savior in these words:
 - ii. “And Jesus arises at that time, a wise man, if it is befitting to call him a man. For he was a doer of no common works, a teacher of men who reverence truth. And he gathered many of the Jewish and many of the Greek race. This was the Christ; and when Pilate condemned him to the cross on the information of our rulers, his first followers did not cease to revere him. For he appeared to them the third day alive again, the divine prophets having foretold this, and very many other things about him. And from that time to this the tribe of the Christians has not failed.’
 - iii. “If, then, even the historian's evidence shows that He attracted to Himself not only the twelve apostles, nor the seventy disciples, but had in addition many Jews and Greeks, He must evidently have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men. For how otherwise

could He have attracted many Jews and Greeks, except by wonderful miracles and unheard-of teaching? And the evidence of the *Acts of the Apostles* goes to show that there were many myriads of Jews who believed Him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets.”

1. (Source: Eusebius, Proof of the Gospel, Book 3, chapter 5)
3. Josephus wrote about the succession of high priests before and during the time of Pilate, mentioning both Annas and Caiaphas. Josephus wrote: “upon whose death (*referring to the death of Caesar Augustus*) Tiberius Nero, his wife Julia's son, succeeded...and he sent Valerius Gratus to be procurator of Judea, and to succeed Annius Rufus.
 - a. This man deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ismael, the son of Phabi, to be high priest.
 - b. He also deprived him in a little time, and ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high priest before, to be high priest;
 - c. which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus;
 - d. and when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor.
 4. When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, after he had tarried in Judea eleven years, when Pontius Pilate came as his successor.”
 - a. (Source: Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, vol. 18, chapter 2)
- vii. Based on Josephus’ account of these things (written just a few decades after the ministry of Jesus), we can see the following:
1. Annas (or Ananas), had been appointed high priest earlier.
 2. Gratus, the Roman procurator over Judea who preceded Pontius Pilate had deposed Annas (and then deposed three successors to Annas!) before appointing Caiaphas (who he refers to as Joseph Caiaphas) to the position.

- a. Clearly the high priesthood had become a “political football”, with the office of high priest given and taken away at the pleasure of the Roman procurator.
 - b. The main interest of the Roman procurator was that the Jews paid their taxes and did not rebel against Roman rule. The high priest would be appointed or removed with that in mind.
- viii. Not clear to me exactly how the roles of Annas and Caiaphas intersected at this time. Annas may have shared some of the high priestly roles with his son-in-law the official high priest, Caiaphas. Or he may have been considered a high priest due to his prior appointment. Or he may have been the unofficial power and influence behind his son-in-law. Regardless, he was a powerful figure in the Jewish religious establishment.
- c. Annas questions Jesus first.
 - i. Annas questions Jesus about His disciples and about His *doctrine* (the word doctrine here refers to His *teachings*, as it is rendered in many translations).
 - ii. Jesus’ response:
 1. “I have spoken openly to the world’, Jesus replied. ‘I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.” (**John 18:20-21**, NIV)
 2. Jesus defends Himself by saying that *everything* He taught was out in the open. Therefore, Annas could ask any of the Jews what Jesus taught.
 3. Jesus said *He taught nothing in secret*.
 - d. No “secret teachings of Jesus”
 - i. Jesus taught many truths that were hidden or that people did not understand readily. However, He taught openly; there were no “secret teachings.”
 - ii. If you do an internet search for “Secret Teachings of Jesus” today, an enormous amount of material will come up.
 1. Many people today, more oriented toward New Age type influences (pagan, sometimes drifting into the occult) embrace

this idea that Jesus was from God, but he had “secret teachings” that most Christians today are unaware of.

- a. Sometimes these people will look to ancient gnostic-type writings of gospels that were rejected by the church.
- b. People also will take Jesus’ teachings out of context and try to harmonize them with Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism) or New Age thinking.
- c. A surprising example that came to my attention recently: attempts to merge Laws of Attraction with the teachings of Jesus.
 - i. Laws of Attraction – very old ideas, maybe thousands of years old. Sometimes clearly and totally pagan (and occult) but other times woven in by popular Christian writers and teachers. Tenants loosely associated with Laws of Attraction thinking include:
 1. All people and the material world are *nothing more than energy*.
 2. Our thoughts are energy.
 3. Our thoughts determine our outcomes. Therefore, by changing our thoughts we can achieve any desired outcome.
 - a. Problem: anything bad that happens (sickness, death, suffering) must be your own fault!
 4. Outcomes can include healing, wealth, partners, jobs, family, children.
 5. If you visualize it, you will get it.
 - a. *The Secret* (popular book and movie)
 - b. *Power of Positive Thinking*
 - c. *Think and Grow Rich*
 - d. Name it and Claim It prosperity gospel

6. Can morph into pantheism: we are all god, or all part of God.
 7. Many of these people also tend to think that *all people are inherently good*, with problems arising from ignorance. (They don't recognize the real problem: that people are *in sin* and need to *repent*.)
- ii. There are some obvious problems with this thinking:
1. If everything you do is the result of what you think, then if you are born with a disease, or if something terrible happens to you (for example if you are abused as a child), *that is attributable to you*. It must be *your fault!*
 - a. Clearly, that is not true.
 2. The universe does not revolve around your own personal desires. Instead, Jesus said that His disciples should pray, "*Your will be done.*" (**Matthew 6:10**)
 - a. We are called to seek that *God's will be done, not our own will.*
 3. Jesus' message to the people was, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (**Matthew 4:17**)
- iii. Problem in the early church: Gnosticism.
1. Foundational principle: the problem in the world is ignorance. Salvation consists in gaining intimate knowledge of the secrets of the universe.
 - a. They tend to believe that the primary problem of mankind is ignorance, not on sin (therefore, not on repentance!)
 - b. They tend to downplay the significance of the material world, and of the flesh.
 - i. Struggle with the idea that Jesus could have had a physical body.

- ii. Struggle with the idea that Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead, and that we will be as well (consider **1 Corinthians 15**).
 - iii. Rejection of the flesh could tend toward the extreme of *asceticism*; or to the opposite extreme of *libertine, lax morals*.
 - iv. In my opinion, some tendencies in evangelical Protestantism tend toward Gnosticism (rejection of resurrection of the body, rejection of real presence in Lord's supper, rejection of necessity of baptism and repentance, etc.)
2. The gnostic-type perspective was addressed in the New Testament, including in the following passages:
- a. "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of *what is falsely called knowledge...*" (**1 Timothy 6:20**, NKJV)
 - b. "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and *every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God*. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (**1 John 4:2-3**, NKJV)
 - c. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world *who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." (**2 John 7**, NKJV)
- iv. Paul did not commit secret knowledge to his disciples. His teaching was all in the open.
- 1. "And *the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses*, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (**2 Timothy 2:2**, NKJV)
 - a. Nothing secret and hidden here! Paul told Timothy to spread the message that was heard among many witnesses, and to pass that down to other faithful men.
 - 2. "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—" (**1 Timothy 6:20**, NKJV)

v. Also, from Jude:

1. “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was *once for all delivered to the saints.*” (**Jude v.3**, NKJV)

e. Jesus before Caiaphas, the high priest

i. Prior to this meeting, Caiaphas demonstrated he was committed to killing Jesus.

1. “Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,” (**Matthew 26:3**, NKJV)
2. “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 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.” (**John 11:45-53**, NKJV)

- a. Amazing: God in His sovereignty even uses a wicked man like Caiaphas, to give a true prophecy about Jesus and accomplish His purposes!

ii. Jesus questioned by Caiaphas (Read **Matthew 26:57-66**)

1. The parallel passage is **Mark 14:60-65**.
2. Caiaphas asks the Big Question: “Tell us if you are *the Christ, the Son of God!*” (**Matthew 26:63**; see also **Mark 14:61**)
3. Jesus answers, “I am”. (**Mark 14:62**)

- a. In many study Bibles and commentaries, the authors claim that the strong reaction against Jesus after he says “I am” is related to Jesus appropriating the divine name of God (from **Exodus 3:14**).
- b. However, there are many other places in the New Testament where people use the phrase, “I am...” (Greek: *ἐγώ εἰμι* / *ego eimi*). As in English, we can see from context that this was NOT understood as referring to the name of God. Examples that illustrate this include:
 - i. “And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.” (**Luke 1:19**, NKJV)
 - ii. “For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,” (**Romans 11:13**, NKJV)
 - iii. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (**1 Timothy 1:15**, NKJV)
 - iv. “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (**1 Corinthians 15:9**, NKJV)
- c. There are also many examples where the phrase “ego eimi / I am” is used in the Greek Old Testament, the LXX, including:
 - i. When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he says, “I am Joseph, your brother.” (**Genesis 45:3**)
 - ii. Ruth says to Boaz, “I am Ruth, your servant”. (**Ruth 3:9**)
 - iii. Bathsheba says, “I am with child”. (**2 Samuel 11:5**; designated **2 Kingdoms 11:5** in the LXX)
 - iv. Elijah says, “Take my life, I am no better than my fathers (**1 Kings 19:4**; designated **3 Kingdoms 19:4** in LXX)

- d. Here He is not in trouble for using the very common Greek words “I am” (common throughout the NT and LXX/OT). He is in trouble for affirming that *He is the Christ, the Son of God* (thereby fulfilling prophecies such as **Psalm 2:2-7**).
4. Later, after Jesus is raised, Peter boldly preaches to the very same high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. (Read **Acts 4:1-13**)
 - a. Peter redeems himself from the cowardice he had shown when Jesus was being questioned.
 - b. Peter applies **Psalm 118:22** to them and makes it personal: “The stone (Jesus) which *YOU builders* rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”
 - c. Peter tells them that there is no other name (besides Jesus) by which men must be saved.
 - d. These men are amazed at the boldness of Peter an “uneducated and untrained” man, and realize that he had been with Jesus.