

The Jewish Trial of Jesus and Peter's Denial

John 18:13-27

August 27, 2023

1. Jesus Delivered to the Jewish Authorities (13-14)

a. Why Annas (13)?

- i. Annas was high priest from AD 6-15 until he was deposed by the Roman Procurator Valerius Gratus.
- ii. Even after being deposed, Annas was still revered as a high priest among the Jews.
- iii. Valerius Gratus seemingly tried to appease the Jews by appointing all 5 sons of Annas as high priest for varying lengths of time.
- iv. Valerius Gratus appointed Caiaphas high priest (son-in-law to Annas) immediately after removing Annas.
- v. The likely reason that the Jews brought Jesus to Annas first was that they viewed him as the highest Jewish authority.

b. Who was Caiaphas (14)?

- i. Caiaphas was the son in law of Annas, and the successor to Annas as high priest.
- ii. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better that Jesus die than the people (cf. 11:49).
- iii. Caiaphas was unknowingly fulfilling the preordained will of God.

c. Who was the High Priest?

- i. This passage is deliberately vague and ambiguous as to which priest conducted the trial of Jesus.
- ii. The likely reason for this is that neither Annas nor Caiaphas were the true high priest.
- iii. The answer to this question is that the true High Priest is neither Annas nor Caiaphas, but Jesus Christ!

2. The First Denial of Peter (15-18)

a. Peter followed Jesus at a distance (15).

- i. This scene plays out at the same time as the trial of Jesus.
- ii. Peter is accompanied by an unnamed disciple, which is a literary technique to place the focus on Peter.
- iii. The anonymous disciple is most certainly the Beloved Disciple, the apostle John (cf. 1:40, 13:23).
- iv. The anonymous disciple knew the high priest and was allowed to enter the palace of the high priest with Jesus.

b. Peter stood outside (16).

- i. While the anonymous disciple is inside with Jesus, Peter is outside, lingering in the darkness.
- ii. The anonymous disciple speaks to the servant girl who kept the door and brought Peter inside.

c. Peter denies Jesus (17-18).

- i. Peter wilts under the scrutiny of the servant girl and denies his relationship to Jesus as His disciple.
- ii. Peter chose to stand with the very ones he had opposed just moments before in the garden.

3. The Witness of Christ and His Disciples (19-24)

a. The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and doctrine (19).

- i. As Peter is denying his relationship with Jesus, the high priest is questioning Jesus about his disciples and teachings.
- ii. The purpose of this mock trial is to shame Jesus, and Peter's denial heaps even more shame upon Jesus.

b. Jesus, the True High Priest, takes control of the trial and questions His accusers (20-21).

- i. Jesus' statements are recorded first, because He is being portrayed as the true High Priest in this scene (20).
- ii. Jesus taught openly yet the Jews arrested and tried Him secretly (20b).
- iii. Jesus then appeals to those who heard Him as witnesses to what He taught (21). Believers are still today witnesses to the truth of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

c. One of the officers of the high priest strike Jesus with the palm of his Hand (22-24).

- i. This statement should have been reversed, "Is that how you treat the true High Priest?" (22).
- ii. Jesus responds with grace and authority (23); As both Priest and Sacrifice, Jesus receives the blow and submits Himself to crucifixion to suffer the penalty of those very sins as our substitutionary sacrifice.
- iii. Verse 24 is deliberately confusing and causes us to ask the question, "who is the high priest?" The answer is that Jesus, the One bound before His captors, is the true High Priest!

4. The Second and Third Denials of Peter (25-27)

a. As Jesus tells the high priest to talk to those who've heard his teachings, Peter is actively denying the One he followed as Rabi and Teacher (25).

b. Then, an eye witness to Peter in the garden accuses Peter, and in the face of such evidence, Peter denied again with cursing and swearing (27; cf. Matthew 26:74).

Conclusion:

1. What is your response to Jesus and His message? Some reject Him for religious reasons. Others reject Him because they see Him as a threat to their power over their own lives.
2. The contrast between Jesus and Peter paints a powerful picture of the grace of God. Though Peter denied Jesus, Jesus did not deny Peter. Jesus covered Peter with His grace and later restored him. Do you need to be restored to fellowship with Jesus?
3. Peter rested heavily on good intentions, natural abilities and even lethal force to advance the kingdom of God. Are you trying to do God's work your way and in your own strength?