

## Sermon – 17/09/2006 am

### Trial of Jesus – Jewish

Study Text: John 18:12-24

Jesus knew his Father's will and submitted to it – shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me (18:11). So when Judas burst into the garden with a large contingent of soldiers and police, Jesus did not resist arrest. His disciple Peter put up a brief fight, cutting off the right ear of the high priest's servant, but Jesus rebuked him for doing this. Jesus allowed himself to be bound and led away to the house of Annas.

The scene now changes from the garden of Gethsemane to the house of Annas. The situation changes from Jesus being free, to Jesus being in bondage. Although Jesus was always in control of the situation, he was now in the hands of men who hated him, men who had long been plotting to kill him. He would face a number of trials. Firstly he would be tried by the Jews and then by the Romans. He would have an ecclesiastical trial and then a civil trial. In the passage before us we have the first of these trials.

#### Accusers

His trial by the Jews was irregular in many ways. A sinless man, the perfect Son of God, could not of course be justly convicted. These men who hated Jesus were determined to get a conviction, indeed a death sentence, so the rules of justice were abandoned. Remember it was night when Jesus was arrested – Passover night. They had to move quickly in order to observe the Sabbath the next day (the Jewish day began at sunset).

They led him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year (18:13). John portrays Caiaphas as a most calculating and corrupt man. He reminds us that Caiaphas was the one who told the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Caiaphas said this when the Jewish leaders were at a loss as to what to do with Jesus after he raised Lazarus from the dead (11:50).

John no doubt reminds us of these words because Caiaphas was speaking more than he knew. There is divine irony here. Jesus would indeed die for the people, not for the political survival of Caiaphas and his cohorts, but for the salvation of all the elect of God. He would die that we might live, that we might live and not die.

Who was Annas? He was high priest and head of the Sanhedrin or ruling Council of the Jews from AD6 to AD15, when Pilate predecessor deposed him in favour of Caiaphas. The Jews, like Scottish Presbyterians, resented such governmental interference. It seems that Annas continued to have considerable influence over the Council, even if Caiaphas was the official high priest as far as the Romans were concerned. In fact five of the sons of Annas occupied this post at various times, in addition to his son-in-law Caiaphas.

Annas was a rich and powerful man in his own right – or maybe because he was high priest. He lived in a large house with a central courtyard. The rest of the family probably lived in the same house. If such was the case then the activities of this night can be explained. Some

scholars are uncertain as to who exactly was conducting the trial in this passage. Who is the high priest referred to in verse 19?

As patriarch and recognised leader of the Jews, Annas wanted to see Jesus first. He would have been particularly pleased to finally see Jesus in chains. He had tried a number of times to arrest this man who kept exposing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He hated this man and was jealous of the following he had gained. Finally, with his money (30 pieces of silver) and his power (his troop of police) he was able to secure the arrest of Jesus. His efforts and plotting finally paid off and he savoured the moment of 'apparent' victory.

This trial before Annas was brief. It was only when Judas came to this house a few hours earlier that the wheels were set in motion. Apart from Annas wanting to see Jesus first, Caiaphas was probably busy organising a meeting of the Sanhedrin. Annas first asked Jesus about his disciples. He was most concerned about the size of Jesus following. Men like Annas are very jealous for power and influence. You still find such men in the church today. If they have a larger congregation they feel more powerful. Jesus did not talk about his flock in such a manner.

He also asked Jesus about his teaching and Jesus obliged with an answer – though not directly. How wonderful it would have been if this man and those gathered in that room and courtyard were ready to listen to the truth which Jesus taught. But proud Annas was not seeking to learn, he was seeking to condemn. He did not like having his doctrines undermined by this uneducated Galilean.

There are still those who ask about Jesus' teaching not to listen and learn, but to criticise and condemn. Such people can be found in the church. How tragic it is when men miss the blessing of the Lord, even at the table of the Lord, because they are intent on condemning what the preacher says. Annas received no blessing even though he had the Son of God standing before him.

One of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand because he did not like the answer Jesus gave the high priest (18:22). We are not told that the high priest ordered this strike – as he did when Paul was on trial (Acts 23:2) – but he made no effort to restrain the violent officer. Annas had no more questions for Jesus. He seemed satisfied with the humiliation and pain inflicted by the officer's slap across the face of Jesus.

Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest(18:24). Some translators want to place this verse earlier, holding that the high priest in verse 19 is Caiaphas. The KJV translates as 'now Annas had sent him', pointing to a similar understanding of the passage. However, most translations, including the NKJV, read 'then Annas sent him'.

Caiaphas had assembled the scribes and elders of the Council and was ready to interrogate Jesus. This may well have been in a larger room in this house – all the while Peter was in the courtyard. John does not record this trial for it is set down in the synoptic gospels. Luke tells us that this official trial was conducted as soon as it was day(Luke 22:66).

## **Accused**

How did Jesus answer his accusers? He was under great pressure. These men hated him and were ready to sentence him to death. How would he respond to gross injustice, not to mention

physical assault? Would Jesus curse them, or call down fire from heaven to destroy them (Luke 9:54)? What would it have been like for Jesus, who had done no wrong yet was in chains and on trial before corrupt men? The response of Jesus is contrasted with that of the man called Peter in this passage.

Jesus did not boast about the crowds that followed him. He did not seek the support of the crowds in his time of trial. He gave no answer with regard to his disciples. With regard to his teaching he had nothing to add to what was publicly known. He directed the high priest to ask anyone from the multitude that heard him teaching in the temple and the synagogues if he wanted to know his doctrine.

Jesus was not empowering his disciples with secret knowledge or some clandestine plan. Whatever he taught was out in the public arena. I spoke openly to the world he said (18:20). Jesus was sent by his Father with a message for the whole world. He came to tell the truth to a world full of lies and deceit; he came to give life to a world in bondage to sin and death. The high priest and all the Jews had heard his message but they chose to reject it.

Jesus did not fear the high priest or the violent men surrounding him. He treated them with respect they did not deserve. Jesus committed himself into the hands of his heavenly Father (I Peter 2:23). Even if his disciples had deserted him, he knew that his Father was with him in this dark hour. He knew that these men could do nothing that his Father did not permit.

The unjustified slap across to the face did not provoke Jesus in any way. He calmly answered his attacker, 'If I said something wrong then tell me, but if I tell the truth why do you strike me' (18:23)? Jesus reminded this man and all who were gathered of a thing called 'justice'. 'Jesus is asking for a fair trial while his opponents are already unmasked as those who, unable to win their case by fair means, are perfectly happy to resort to foul'.

Here in the house of the high priest the Son of God was confronted by the forces of religion. Though called by God, and given the Law by God, these men had corrupted the truth of God and made it their own religion. They were the leaders of what was in reality a man-made religion. They did not love the Lord their God as Moses commanded – nor did they love their neighbour. Jesus would confront and overthrow the religions of the world for all are false and opposed to the truth.

Jesus submitted to the abuse and humiliation of wicked men because he had first submitted himself to the will of God. This is an example to us Peter tells us (I Peter 2:21). If you likewise submit yourself to God you will also be able to submit yourself to others, and so glorify God and his Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus submitted himself to this humiliation because of his love for you. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. By his stripes you were healed (Isaiah 53:5, I Peter 2:24). Do you believe this?

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