

The Passion Of The Lord

The Arrest and Trial of The Lord Before Annas

The Arrest

It was a cold (Jn. 18:18) dark night for they came with “lanterns and torches” (Jn. 18:3). How striking are references to night (Matt. 26:31, 34; Jn. 13:30). These men were coming to arrest the “Light of men” (Jn. 1:4) with lanterns and torches. In a very real way they had rejected the Light, and walking in darkness intellectually, spiritually, and circumstantially; they needed man made lights and a traitor to guide them (Jn. 18:3). Rejection of the “Light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 49:6), the “Light which lighteth every man” (Jn 1.9), “the Light of the world” (Jn. 8.12), and the “Light of the glory of the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 4:6) will always result in darkness and night. The lovely Son of God was intrinsically and intensely holy. Yet, while men sought to find fault with the Lord, their own faults were blazing like the noon day sun.

There were two distinct groups of people mentioned at the arrest of our Lord and two specific individuals. The groups were the officers of the Jews, the temple police, and the Roman band (Jn. 18:12). The two specific leading individuals were the captain of the Romans (Jn. 18:12) and Judas (Matt. 26:47-50; Mk. 14:43-45; Lk. 22:47-48; Jn. 18:3). What a sight, a political leader and an apostate Jew working together with political and religious might seeking to destroy the Lord. It was a foreshadow of a future event when the Beast (the political leader) and the False Prophet (the apostate Jew) unite their power to wage war against the Lord of glory.

The Holy Spirit will emphasize that it is Jesus who they bound and led to Annas” (Jn. 18:19). Note the times His name is used: “The high priest then asked Jesus” (v.19); “Jesus answered” (v.20); “Struck Jesus” (v.22); and “Jesus answered” (v.23). The darkness of this can be understood when we know that the word “Jesus” means “Deliverer”. He was the Deliverer from the bondage of religiosity and sin, and yet in blindness they show their utter disdain and rejection of Him.

A Survey Of The Trials

The trial of the Lord was a devilish covert operation in which they sought to find fault in the only one who was holy, harmless, and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Strictly speaking, it was not a trial for no charge had been laid, nor could ever be laid against Him. Rather it was an interrogation to vigorously seek some accusation against Him by which, with a show of legality and religious love for God, they could put the just One to death. The Holy Spirit does not dwell on the illegalities of man in making Christ a “Victim of an unjust system”, nor on His condemnation being the result of a series of “if only’s”. This is a stupendous activity of infinite grace blended with the brilliance of God in His checkmating of Satan and perfecting Christ to be a high priest (Heb. 5:9). For centuries Satan had been seeking to checkmate God’s eternal purpose, and when it appeared that the evil one had succeeded, the Lord rose from the dead and Satan was defeated, and that forever. It was God permitting Satan and man to have their own way, but in their blindness failing to see that this was the outworking of the divine plan for redemption. Amazing is the fact that Christ the Governor among the nations (Psa. 22:28) and King eternal (1 Tim. 1:17) stood before Annas, a puppet priest appointed by Rome!

As the chief priests, leaders of the people, and elders sat in ostentatious pride judging the Lord, they all knew this court was a sham and there was nothing legal about it. Yet, these trials had to be held, all six of them. The Lord was brought before:

- a) Annas (Jn. 18:13-24)
- b) Caiaphas, and the scribes and elders were already assembled (Matt. 26:57-58)
- c) Caiaphas again (Matt. 27:1-2)
- d) Pilate, sovereign power (Mk. 15:1-20)
- e) Herod, delegated power (Lk. 23:7-11)
- f) Pilate again (Lk. 23:11-26)

These trials will be taken up separately, therefore in this paper we will only deal with the trial before Annas.

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The question then comes to the fore, “Since this court was known to be illegal then why did they have to have it?” There are a number of reasons:

- a) There had to be a resemblance of legality and diffuse the total blame from themselves. On the one hand, they could say that they had maintained the law by killing a blasphemer (Jn. 19:7), and on the other hand say that they themselves did not kill Him, they condemned Him, but it was Pilate who authorized His crucifixion (Jn. 19:15-16). However, the Holy Spirit lays the blame very squarely upon them (Acts 2:23; 3:15).
- b) As much as they could contrive excuses, their determination was to put the Lord to death as seen by the change of expression in Matthew and Mark. In Mark they sought witnesses, but in Matthew it is: “they sought false witnesses” (Matt. 26:60). It would seem that they sought true witnesses and failing this, they sought for those who would be distorters of the truth. Evidently truth did not matter to them and I wonder, since Pilate knew they had delivered because of envy (Matt. 27:18), was this part of the reason he asked the Lord: “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). The starkness of the Holy Spirit’s witness is alarming, they “sought false witness . . . but found none”, and could find none whose witness agreed” (Matt. 26:59-60; Mk. 14:56). How could they find a true witness who would find fault in the person of the Lord? At no point of time in His entire life were there any actions ever committed by Him which were in the slightest iota contrary to his teachings, and profession as to who He was. Never did He ever rebel against God by tempting Him, nor was there ever a word, attitude, or activity of an insubordinate nature, disloyalty and ingratitude was never in Him. He loved God with all His heart, strength, mind and soul, living a life which constantly rose before God as a sweet fragrance. This man stood there void of any infraction of God’s law, any deviation from God’s will, or any distortion of God’s character.
- c) They needed a plausible reason to put the Lord to death and to clear themselves, so they used the scriptures to have the Lord condemn Himself. Caiaphas says: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt. 26:63). Mark records: “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mk. 14:61). In adding the expression “I adjure thee”, the Lord heard the voice of “swearing, adjuration, and according to the Law of God He must answer (Lev. 5:1). By obeying the scriptures the Lord had given to them the evidence needed for His death.
- d) With his official confession of: “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven” (Mk. 14:62), the response of the chief priests and elders was: “He is guilty of death” (Matt. 26:66), but in Mark it says: “They all condemned Him to be guilty of death” (Mk. 14:64). This was not simply ignoring Christ, it is a positive hatred, enflamed by Satanic venom. He was accused and hated because they could not tolerate the exposing of their hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1); the setting aside of the law of God by traditions being shown as evil (Mk. 7:9-13), superficiality of their religiosity, (Matt. 12:10-12), and the brilliancy of His answers when they tried to trick Him (Lk. 20:20-25). For them there was no room here for debate, He had shown what they were and therefore the only answer was His death.

Why did He have to experience such degrading for it was not part of the penalty for sins? This suffering and debasing was necessary for Him to be a perfected High priest. It was part of His learning the cost of obedience (Heb. 5:8). How great is His love that He would voluntarily subject himself to such experiences so that he could feel and sympathize with us, to be accused and hated because the truth stood in moral opposition to their power, position, and pride.

Can it be true, the things they say of you
You walked this earth, sharing with friends you knew
All that they had, the work the joy the pain
That we might find the way to heaven again.

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Can it be true the things they did to you
The death the shame and where your friends so few
So all alone you stood afflicted shamed
That we might find a comforter in pain.

Since it was only the Romans that had the power to put Christ to death, why was He then brought before the priests? I submit that in this we see the beauty of the fulfilling of the sacrificial ritual of the Old Testament, where the animal had to be brought to the priest and only then put to death. (Thus Christ was, apart from other reasons, first brought to the priests).

Three times over in Nehemiah we read of the sheep gate. "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel" (Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39). This was so called because when sheep were being brought to sacrifice from the East side of Jerusalem where Gethsemane was, they passed through this gate. How striking that the true Lamb now passed through that gate en route to the house of the High Priest.

The References

Matthew's account:

- a) Christ brought before Caiaphas (ch. 26:57-68)
- b) Christ brought before Pilate (ch. 27:2, 11-31)

Mark's account:

- a) Christ brought before the High Priest, where all the chief priests, elders and scribes (ch. 14:53-65)
- b) Christ brought before Pilate (ch. 15:1-20)

Luke's account:

- a) Christ brought before the High Priest (ch. 22:54, 63-65)
- b) Christ brought before the council (ch. 22:66-71)
- c) Christ brought before Pilate (ch. 23:1-6)
- d) Christ brought before Herod (ch. 23:7-11)
- e) Christ brought before Pilate a second time (ch. 23:11-26)

John's account:

- a) Christ brought before Annas (ch. 18:13-24)
- b) Christ sent to Caiaphas (ch. 18:24)
- c) Christ sent to Pilate (ch. 18:28-19:16)

The Trial By Annas

The arraignment was in two parts, the first being the interrogation and the Lord's answer, the second being the Lord being smitten by the servant.

When the Lord was brought before Annas, no charge had been laid against Him, consequently it was his responsibility to discover something which could be used against Him. This was an impossible task. There were two avenues Annas could use, witnesses and self incrimination, neither of which would work. Standing there, being the light the Lord's moral excellency would shine, and in so doing would put these men under the awakening of their own consciences. The same thing happened when they brought the woman to him and they went out "convicted by their own conscience" (Jn. 8:9). These religious leaders would be forced to feel the guilt of their wickedness. Before them stood a man who was utterly holy; in whom God was well pleased (Lk. 3:22); the servant whom God delighted in (Isa. 42:1); and they were trying to find fault in Him. Since God, in the

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fullness of holiness could find no fault, it meant that Annas and his associates were setting themselves up as being more holy than God in assessing the moral purity of Christ. Pathetic are the attempts of man for seeking to find a flaw in Him who had often been tried before.

- a) “And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.” (Mk. 12:13)
- b) “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.” (Matt. 22:15)
- c) “Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him” (Jn. 8:5-6).

Our Lord stands before Annas bound, and it would seem that the bindings were never taken from Him for when he was brought to Caiaphas, he was sent bound (Jn. 18:13, 24). They came to take Him with: “swords and staves (Mk. 14:43), as if He were a vicious thug ready to violently fight, but He goes with them and now He stands bound like a common criminal.

Annas asked Jesus of his disciples and doctrine:

The word translated “ask” is a common word, there was nothing vicious in how he asked, but behind the question was the subtleness of the evil one. Annas asked Him concerning two matters:

- a) His disciples:
 - i) Annas had to find a reason to have the Lord brought before Pilate. He therefore, when seeking an accusation of sedition, Annas wants to find out why they became His disciples. Was it as a spiritual leader or as King? How many were there, were they throughout the country, or localized? Reality was that they would not have been good witnesses for they had all forsook Him and fled (Mk. 14:50).
- b) His doctrine:
 - i) When it comes to the Lord’s doctrine, it is interesting that these men were not interested in finding true evidence. They never asked about the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:43); the healing of the leper (Mk. 1:40-41); the giving of sight to the blind (Jn. 9:7); nor the liberation of those who were demon possessed (Matt. 8:28-32). That sort of evidence they did not want.
 - ii) The Lord was asked about his doctrine, His instruction, and teachings. I see this both on a spiritual level and a political level. Did His teachings go against the teachings of Moses, against the traditions of the elders? Did He set Himself above the law, and did He promote his Kingship, a new form of government? As much as these men despised being under Rome, they could use Rome to have Christ put to death. These may be interesting considerations but what was the doctrine of the Lord? His doctrine is mentioned in Matt. 7:28; 22:33; Mk. 1:22, 27; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Lk. 4:32; Jn. 7:16, 17. From these references I would gather that when Annas asked the Lord of His doctrine, it was relative to its source, content, and authority. It was His authority that was a major factor for them, mentioned in all three gospels (Matt. 21:23, Mk. 11:28, Lk. 20:2).

The Lord’s Answer

Now the Light shines, for instead of answering Annas concerning the source of His authority, the Lord dealt with the content and threw the question back to Annas: “Ask them which heard me” (Jn. 18:21). The chief priests, Sadducees, Scribes, Pharisees, etc., had all listened to hear His words. Now the Lord calls on them to witness what He said was doctrinally wrong (Jn. 18:21). This, like an arrow, pierced deeply to the extent that the officer hit the Lord (Jn. 18:22). The personal pronoun “I” is emphatic, thus “I spake openly”; “I ever taught”; “in secret I said nothing”; “they know what I said”. The light was shining and exposing the distinction between what the Lord did and what they were doing. This whole court was an illegal charade, a covert operation. All that the Lord did was open, nothing was ever done in a clandestine manner. They felt the sting of this rebuke and they hated it. Furthermore, according to Jewish law a person was innocent until creditable witnesses could evidence a proper case. This they had not done, therefore, Annas was completely out of line in questioning the Lord, and that is

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what the Lord showed. The Light here will not assist Annas in an illegal activity. These people were the witnesses to that which He had said. The Light is then indicating to Annas, let them now speak.

Annas asked the Lord about His disciples and doctrine, to which our Lord replied that he could ask those who heard Him. He had ever taught in the synagogues where the Jews always resort, thus he will not incriminate Himself, but more beautifully He will not add to the sins of this man by having Him incriminate Himself.

This statement of the Lord should have, at the very least, been an arrow of conviction to Annas, for in contrast to Christ who did everything openly, Annas was acting in a covert manner. He and his associates were those of whom the Lord had spoken in earlier days when He said: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8), or “which trusted in themselves . . . and despised others” (Lk. 18:9).

When the Lord said: “I spake openly to the world” (Jn. 18:20), how deep did their conscience prick? With blazing fierceness the light shone, He did everything openly. Satan hates openness and therefore it is his servants who hide the leaven in the meal (Matt. 13:33) and who haunt the “secret chambers” (Matt. 24:26). In so saying, the Lord was openly rebuking Annas and declaring their injustice in how this court was being conducted.

This was further emphasized by His statement: “I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort” (Jn. 18:20). Thus the Lord was no secret separatist acting in a covert manner. Their synagogue was where he taught.

Another observation must be made when the Lord said: “in secret have I said nothing” (Jn. 18:20). This is profound for the Lord is giving a veiled but unmistakable declaration of His deity. “I am the LORD; and there is none else . . . I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth” (Isa. 45:18-19). Again: “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me” (Isa. 48:16). This is one of the very few verses in the Old Testament which indicates plainly the three persons of the Trinity.

Listening carefully to the Lord, not a word is said about the disciples. In his day, David protected the sheep from the bear and the lion, so the Lord does not say a word about the disciples. Love will protect its own.

The Smiting Of The Lord With The Hand

Annas having asked the question, and the Lord having answered saying: “Why asketh thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said” (Jn. 18:21). This arrow of conviction and contempt for the prisoner caused one of the officers to slap Him with the palm of His hand. The Lord then asks the officer: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?” (Jn. 18:23). But this man’s mouth was shut. Mark informs us that other smitings would follow (Mk. 14:65) when they would (from the Greek) keep smiting him. How great was their darkness when they failed to see that by their very activity and His response there was the fulfilling of the scriptures (Isa. 50:6).

The Lord says to the servant: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil” (Jn. 18:23). It is in this book we read of:

- a) John Baptist being a witness. “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all [men] through him might believe. (Jn. 1:7)
- b) The Lord bearing witness to John. “And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all [men] come to him.” (Jn. 3:26)
- c) The Father bears witness to Christ. “There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.” (Jn. 5:32, 37; 8:18)

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- d) The works bear witness to Christ. “But I have greater witness than [that] of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.” (Jn. 5:36)
- e) The disciples bear witness to Christ. Joh 15:27 “And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” (Jn. 15:27)
- f) Christ bears witness to the truth. “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (Jn. 18:37)

What a manifestation of man’s hatred for the Light, and Annas does not say a word of rebuke. This was the first blow which our Lord received from the hands of men, and this came not from one of the Roman soldiers, but from a Jew, a religionist!

Peter will thunder through the ages: “When he suffered he threatened not” (1 Pet. 2:23). There was no fleshy surging of vindication here, but calmness of spirit ever seeking to convict for mans deliverance and liberation. These were the words of love, the heart of God being revealed in seeking the wayward and sin blinded man. The Lord stands here “without sin”. Paul, that servant of God, responded in the flesh’s ignorance when he said: “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall” (Acts 23:1-5). The Lord never had to retract a word, modify a statement, correct a behavior, or apologize because of an activity committed in ignorance.

How dark this statement is for we never read again of Christ and Annas. One almost trembles at the last recorded words of the Lord to those in that room: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil” (Jn. 18:23). The mouth of man was stopped, the sword had come from His mouth, the sovereign Lord had spoken.

We must ponder in wonder at the attitude of the Lord when standing before that distinguished body of religious leaders who were set upon killing Him? Speaking for myself, my natural reaction would be fear and anxiety, or if I consider Paul when he responded in a natural way, verbally lashing Ananias when: “Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? (Acts 23:2-3.) It was wrong and Paul apologized saying: “I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people” (Acts 23:5).

When Christ was slapped with the palm of the servants hand, He made no out of control comment, but displayed unspeakable grace. As in all the slapping and buffeting our Lord received, there is a display of the blindness of man. Moses smote the rock and paid a heavy price. That rock was a picture of the Lord, it was serious to smite it. Now man smites not the picture, but the Lord of glory, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and as the Mighty God stood there, glorious self restraint, He did not call for judgement. He came to seek and to save that which was lost and that is how he saw these men. These were the ones for whom he prayed: “Father forgive them they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34)

The Holy Spirit emphasizes that the one standing before them was Jesus. They saw him as nothing more than a man and nothing less than a young disturber of the status quo, a conscience pricker, and a threat to their despotic authority. Thank God we see Him differently. No created being can comprehend and appreciate the perfections of the Lord throughout the proceedings of this kangaroo court. He accepted this as the good and perfect will of God, therefore in quietness of soul He will speak no verbal remonstrance to the falsity of the court. His stance will be that of lowliness blended with conscious authority, lowliness blended with dignity, conscious that whilst being in the hands of men He was in the hands of God. The Lord was not the prisoner of men but One who saw Himself as the Sent One from God doing His will, thus there was no resisting, nor calling on angels to deliver Him. Knowing His heart of love there would have been no fleshy smugness in knowing that God would deal with them, or that in a future day they would stand before him. His first prayer from the cross bears witness to this fact. As the Lord stood before these assessors He was aware that there were holier eyes watching and evaluating, God Himself! It was God he sought to glorify, and irrespective of the evaluation of men, the appraisal of God was all that mattered. He was also aware that the hierarchy of two other governments were watching, the

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principalities, powers of the demonic world, and the principalities, powers, thrones and dominions of the celestial court. How perfect was His perfect peace (Jn. 14:27).

Annas had failed! What a humiliation he knew in this most crucial case of interrogation, and in it, he failed! Failed before his son in law (Jn. 18:13) and failed before the religious leaders. At some dark point of time it began to dawn on him that success was not in his hands, and we read: “Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest” (Jn. 18:24).

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by his Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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