

Annas Questions Jesus

John 18:12b-14 and 19-24

About 2:00 am Friday morning, the fifteenth of Nisan

Once the contingent got inside the walls of Yerushalayim, the tribune halted the march and asked **the Temple guard** if they needed further assistance. They said no. They would take control of the prisoner. **Then those who had arrested Jesus led Him away and took Him into the home of Caiaphas the high priest.** The Romans retreated back inside Fortress Antonia and wondered why they had been needed in the first place, and, indeed, why the Jews needed 500 of them.

The march started again and, fortunately, there were very few people milling about in the northwestern part of Yerushalayim at that time in the morning. The few who were, stopped to stare at the lanterns, the torches, the noisy line of march and the lone **prisoner** in the middle of it all. But there were no demonstrations for **the Messiah**. No cries for **His** release. In fact, no one, at least thus far, even seemed to recognize **Him**.

The priests and others congratulated themselves on taking the long way back. It had served their purpose. The Temple, at this moment, could be teeming with followers of **the Nazarene**, and had **the prisoner** been led bound through the Eastern Gate into the Court of the Gentiles they could have demonstrated, or possibly even fought **the Temple guard**. Then a riot would have started that would have ended only when Pilate sent in his soldiers.

Headed toward the palatial homes of **Caiaphas** and **Annas**, the Sadducees and Pharisees became jovial. The assignment was drawing to a close and they felt free to admit to one another that, for a time there in the olive garden, each had secretly worried. Each had heard reports of such wonders that this **man** had accomplished that there had been some trepidation. Who would have expected that **he** would turn out to be a most ordinary **Nazarene**? If the members of the Sanhedrin had anything to be ashamed of, it was that they had seen fit to take such a large party with them to do the work. One **man** with a club could have set the companions of **Jesus** to flight and, as the Galilean did not believe in violence, **he** could have been bound and led away without a struggle.

The contingent arrived at the big double courtyard before **the** adjoining **homes** of **Annas** and **Caiaphas**. There were many happy words back and forth as the servants inside unlocked the gates. Ordinarily, they would have entered by the servants' door, but this was too small

for the victorious throng. They surged inside, pushing the victim before them. More lamps were lighted at once, because there was a distinguished company of religious elite on the premises who wanted to get a good look at this **man**. Members of **the Great Sanhedrin**, hurriedly summoned, came running out of the house of **Caiaphas**, holding their white robes off the flagstones as their feet raced across the court.

Some of the women of the household came out and stood in the shadows of the balcony to see **the prisoner** about whom their men had debated so often. Some of the captors ran off to tell **Annas** that the blasphemer was even now standing under guard in front of **his** house. **Caiaphas** came down the steps slowly. Now, with the end in sight, **he** had patience. **His** first interest was not in confronting **the Nazarene**, but in getting the reports of **his** men on how the arrest had been accomplished, what the attitude of the Romans might be, where were the band of his followers, and whether there had been any popular uprising against the will of **the Jewish Supreme Court, the Great Sanhedrin** (see Lg - [The Great Sanhedrin](#)).

The high priest heard the reports. They were all good. The matter had been handled discreetly and the Holy City was not even aware of what happened. **Caiaphas** was elated. **He** had struck a good blow for **God** and for the Temple. A sore had festered on the body of Judea . . . and **he, Caiaphas**, had stopped the bleeding. **He** stroked **his** silky beard and ordered the phony **Messiah** to be taken next door to **Hananyah**, which was the Hebrew name of **his** father-in-law **Annas**.

This was a diplomatic move. **Caiaphas** could wait. It was proper to permit **Annas** a first look at the face of the prisoner and to conduct the first examination. Besides, **Caiaphas** knew what **his father-in-law** would do; **he** would order **the prisoner** returned at once to the acting **high priest** and **the Great Sanhedrin** for trial.¹⁵¹⁶

Then they bound Jesus and brought Him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year (John 18:12b-13). **He** was small, delicate, hair splitting, and precise. When **Yeshua** was eleven years old, Publius Sulpicius Quirinus, who was then beginning his second term as the Roman Procurator of all Syria, had appointed **Annas high priest**. Thus, **Annas** became rich, influential beyond the borders of **his** country. **He** was a brilliant schemer, and men in positions of power greater than **his** feared **him**.

The house of **Annas** was next door to **Caiaphas'** in the Essene quarter. It was built on the slope of the hill, and beneath the main living quarters it had a lower story with a porch in front. **He** did not want **the prisoner** inside of **his** house, so **he** came out on the porch and ordered **the Nazarene** brought to **him**. **He** was **the high priest** from 7 to 14 AD. From the

Jewish perspective, **the high priest** held his office for life. But Valerius Gratus, the Roman Procurator of Judea under Emperor Tiberius, deposed **Annas** and substituted Ismael son of Fabi, then Eleazar son of Arianus, then Simon son of Camith, and lastly, Joseph **Caiaphas**.

Even though **the Procurator** removed **Annas** from office, **he** had kept the Temple business as a private industry, and no one bought a lamb, a dove, or even an ox as a sacrifice without paying **him**. Therefore, **Annas** maintained control behind the scenes as **high priest** through his son-in-law **Caiaphas**. But from the Roman perspective **Caiaphas** was **the high priest**. **There were 21 rules of the Great Sanhedrin regarding trials and in their zeal to kill Jesus they broke every one of them on the fifteenth of Nisan.** Because they brought **Yeshua** to the home of **Annas** in the middle of the night they broke **rule number 6** that said **Sanhedrin trials could only be conducted in the hall of judgment at the Temple compound** (see Lh - **The Laws of the Great Sanhedrin Regarding Trials**).

Meanwhile Annas, the aging regal leader of the Sadducees, **questioned the maverick Rabbi about His talmidim and His teaching (John 18:19)**. The religious authorities were finally getting close to achieving their goal of getting rid of this **troublemaker from Galilee**. But because **there were to be no steps of criminal proceedings after sunset, this broke rule number 2** (see Lh - **The Laws of the Great Sanhedrin Regarding Trials**). The guards pushed and dragged **the Anointed One** to **Annas** not because **they** despised the prisoner, but because **they** wanted to show some zeal in front of **Annas**, the real power behind the scenes. When **Jesus** did not hurry, **they** kicked **him**.

The old **man** sat and studied the young **convict**. No one knows for sure what thoughts crossed **his** mind, or what questions passed **his** lips. **He** sat and **he** looked and **he** may have wondered, idly, what motivated a young nobody into posing as **the Savior** of the world. This **man** did not appear to be a lunatic. The reports that had been coming in for over a year tended to show just the opposite. **The Nazarene** seemed to be intelligent; it was said that **He** was well versed in the Torah, although no one knew what rabbinical school **he** had followed. **He** was a sturdy carpenter; and was not given to extravagance or vice. Then why?

Annas looked for a long time. **He** would not try this **man**. Let **Caiaphas** do it. **The laws of the Sanhedrin said that not less than twenty-three members of the Great Sanhedrin could try a capital case**, and the old **man** was certain that, by this time, **his** son-in-law had awakened and summoned the other members. Still, it was interesting to inquire why a **man** would want to pose as **the Messiah**, since **he** must have know that sooner or later **He** would be challenged by **the Temple**. In fact, the ratio of the chances of being challenged by **the Temple** was in direct proportion to the success of the so-called **Meshiach**. And this one was

highly successful. But even at that, **He** might have escaped challenge and the charge of blasphemy if **He** had not kicked over the tables of **Annas'** moneychangers and condemned **Annas'** animal market (see **Bs - Jesus' First Cleansing of the Temple at Passover**).¹⁵¹⁷

In his mid fifties, **Annas'** entire life had revolved around obtaining wealth and power. **He** probably asked the renegade Rabbi why **he** didn't believe in the Oral Law (see **Ei - The Oral Law**). Who were **his** followers? How many? **He** was accustomed to for men such as **Yeshua** to grovel before **him** and plead for mercy. But **Jesus** didn't do that. Instead, **He** looked steadily at this worldly leader and replied: **I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question Me? Under the rules of the Sanhedrin regarding trials, Yeshua knew - and so did Annas - that it was against their rules to solicit the testimony of anyone except witnesses and corroborators. Besides, under their rules, no prisoner had to undergo preliminary examination. Ask those who heard Me. Surely they know what I said** (Yochanan 18:20-21).

But when **Jesus** said this, one of the officials nearby struck **Him** in the face (John 18:22), which broke **rule number 20 that said judges were to be kind and humane** (see **Lh - The Laws of the Great Sanhedrin Regarding Trials**). "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

The Holy One shook his head to clear the effects of the blow: **If I said something wrong, Jesus** replied, **testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike Me?** Then **Annas** stood up and sent **Jesus**, still bound, back to his son-in-law the high priest (John 18:23-24). **Caiaphas** was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people (Yochanan 18:14). The end had begun.