

Exegesis

Vs. 12-14 – Now that the Lord has given his permission to be captured, John tells us, "the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him." But rather than take their divine Prisoner straight to Caiaphas, we're told that they "led him away to Annas first." For those unfamiliar with the hierarchy in Jerusalem at this time, it might be a surprise to learn that Jesus was taken to Annas before Caiaphas. After all, the Synoptics make no *explicit* mention of such an event. Though, admittedly, Luke mentioned both men served as high priest at the same time (cf. Lu. 3:2).

However, as I'll show, John did not invent this detail. Peter's threefold denial is recounted by all four gospels, and all four writers specify that this occurred as Jesus was being interrogated by the religious leaders (cf. vs. 13; Matt. 26:57; Mar. 14:53; Lu. 22:54) but *before* he was taken to Pilate (cf. vs. 28; Matt. 27:2; Mar. 15:1; Lu. 23:1). Admittedly, the synoptics' version of events might lead us to assume that Jesus' interrogation by the Sanhedrin was a single *uninterrupted* event. But, upon closer inspection, it is clear that just as the Synoptics *compressed* Peter's denials, Matthew, Mark, and Luke have *combined* Jesus' cross-examinations into one seamless episode. In classic Johannine fashion, the Beloved Apostle shows us the actual progression of events was far more complicated.¹ In reality, before Caiaphas *formally* questioned Jesus in the company of the whole Jewish council (cf. Mar. 14:55), Jesus was brought to Annas' private home, where the high priest questioned the Lord *personally* (cf. Lu. 22:54). As John will show us, it was specifically during this *informal* investigation that Peter's first denial took place.

John himself acknowledges that this might, at first, be confusing. This is why he explains to his readers that Annas "was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year." In other words, Caiaphas was the *acting* high priest during Jesus' trial. But before Caiaphas took power in A.D. 18, Annas held the position from A.D. 6-15.² The only reason why Annas still didn't hold office was that he had been deposed by the Romans. And since the Jews thought this was yet another overreach by their Roman overlords, Annas held significant sway within the Jewish community. And so, while not the *actual* high priest, Annas *retained* much of the influence of a sitting high priest. This is why, even after Annas was removed in A.D. 15, five of his sons, including his son-in-law—Joseph Caiaphas—held the position for the next *twenty-six*

¹ For example, the events in the upper room are abridged in the Synoptics, whereas John recounts not only the Farwell Discourse but Jesus' parting prayer, revealing a lot more took place during that time. Coincidentally, Jesus' interactions with Pilate are more expanded in John than in the Synoptics.

² Carson (1991), p. 580.

years.³ All of whom, I might add, would've been referred to as "high priests" (cf. Ac. 4:6).⁴ Thus, the position of high priest was a *lifelong* occupation; once a high priest, always a high priest (cf. Num 35:25). Even though Caiaphas was, from the Roman's perspective, the "high priest," in the eyes of the Jews, the *real* high priest was Annas.⁵ How ironic. Just as the Romans rejected Annas from being a high priest, so the Jews will reject Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest (cf. Heb. 4:14-16).

John reminds us that Caiaphas was the one who said "that it was expedient that one man should die for the people." This is a call back to 11:50. We'd expect such rationalization from pagan Gentiles, not from someone who was supposed to be the spiritual leader of the Jewish faith. To know if Judaism was corrupt in the first century, one need only look to the priesthood. By their own deplorable acts, they had forfeited their right to be God's representatives. As shepherds lead, so follow the sheep. And the sheep of Israel were lost (cf. Mat. 10:6). A better Shepherd was needed (cf. 10:11), one who would lay down his life for the sheep and not use them for selfish gain (cf. 10:12-13).

Vs. 15-18 – At this point, John alternates between Jesus' inquisition and Peter's denial. At a rhetorical level, this technique is called an "intercalation," where different scenes are sandwiched together, thereby providing commentary on each other.⁶ For instance, just as the Lord was put on trial by Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, so was Peter tested by three individuals. How each defendant answered their inquisitors reveals much about the distinction between Jesus' flawless nature and the flawed nature of human beings.

However, at a narrative level, intercalation also establishes credibility for this account. You see, though all the disciples initially abandoned Jesus in Gethsemane (cf. Mar. 14:50), two of the apostles followed sometime after as the Lord was led to Annas' home. According to John, one of the disciples was "Simon Peter," and the other is simply referred to as "another disciple." For John, this is a coy way of referring to himself, like how he refers to himself as being the "beloved disciple" (cf. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Thus, the Beloved Disciple knew about both the informal trial with Annas and Peter's denial because he was *present* to see the two scenes unfold before his eyes.

But how could a lowly fisherman like John access the high priest's "palace," or more precisely, his "courtyard"? Our faithful narrator explains that, though it may be hard to believe, he "was

³ Köstenberger (2008), p. 512.

⁴ Keener (2012), 2:1089.

⁵ Carson (1991), p. 581.

⁶ Klink (2016), p. 746

known [emphasis added] unto the high priest." And so, John was allowed entry "into the [courtyard] of the high priest" because, in some way, the two men had a rapport. Such phrasing and the fact that the apostle was permitted uninhibited access to Annas' abode implies that John was more than just a mere acquaintance to the old high priest.⁷ It is impossible to know to what extent the two men knew each other, so we mustn't speculate too much. But suffice to say, whatever the nature of their connection, it was enough that, despite knowing he was Jesus' disciple, Annas didn't consider John a threat and that the doorkeeper recognized him.⁸

Given that we're told twice in the span of two verses that John "was known unto the high priest," we're also led to believe that Peter's *anonymity* kept him from gaining access to Annas' property. In other words, "Peter stood at the door without" because he was *unfamiliar*. Indeed, this is why it was only *after* John asked "her that kept the door" to let Peter in that he was "brought in." But, to our surprise, *Peter wanted to retain his anonymity*. Because when asked, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples," the lead apostle replied, "I am not." Standing in the courtyard, Peter had a golden opportunity to dispel any uncertainty about his identity. He could've boldly affirmed that he was one of Jesus' disciples. Instead, while in earshot of John himself, Peter *abandoned his calling*. Peter's confidence, which had once been so tenacious (cf. 13:37), crumbled before the query of a simple serving girl.⁹

Thus, instead of going into the proverbial lion's den, showing his support of the Lord, Peter warmed himself by a fire made by "the servants and officers." Rather than standing inside with John, Simon abandoned not only his *oldest* (cf. Lu. 5:1-11) but also his *closest* friend (cf. 13:23-24), preferring instead to stand outside in the "cold." Just like the betrayer "stood" beside the soldiers in Gethsemane (cf. vs. 5), Peter "stood" alongside the very ones who had led his beloved teacher like a lamb to the slaughter (cf. vs. 26).¹⁰

Doubtless, he had yet to realize the severity of his actions, but soon, Peter would be convicted by nothing more than the crow of a rooster. By that time, however, this one bad decision will have turned into *three*. May we never forget that the same one who insisted he'd never turn his back on Jesus ended up denying him three times in a single night. If Peter was not beyond

⁷ Morris (1995), p. 666.

⁸ Carson (1991), p. 581, "Both verses say he was 'known' to the high priest: indeed, the Greek word (*gnōstos*) suggests more than mere recognition, the way a prime minister might recognize his or her cobbler, but something of intimacy" (cf. 2 Ki. 10:11; Ps. 55:13; Lu. 2:44).

⁹ The term "damsel" is the Greek word **παιδίσκη** (*paidiskē*), which could refer to a young servant girl. But it is difficult to know the precise age of this woman based on this word alone as the term shows up again in Gal. 4:22-31, where it refers to Hagar. Given this woman kept the door of Annas, it was far more likely she wasn't a child.

¹⁰ Köstenberger (2008), p. 515.

failing, then none of us are (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12). In the words of David, “how the mighty have fallen” (1 Sam. 1:19:27).

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 80 | John 18:12-18

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

After hearing about the death of Saul at the hands of the Philistines, David lamented, putting his grief to verse in 2 Sam. 19:19-27. Interestingly, "how the mighty have fallen" appears at the beginning and the end of David's poem (2 Sam. 1:19, 27). And such an expression typifies tonight's lesson. As Saul was a larger-than-life personality, head and shoulders above his peers, so was Peter. Like Saul, Peter's hubris got the better of him, and he fell hard. But unlike Saul, who fell in battle, the lead apostle was brought low by nothing more than the query of a simple servant girl. Indeed, it is a tragic thing to watch the mighty fall.

Therefore, we must always be on our guard. Paul says it is when we *think* that we stand that we must take care to secure our footing; otherwise, we're liable to fall (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12). None of us are above failure; it can come to us all. Should you doubt this, think of Saul and Peter. Bigger men than us have fallen.

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