

TUESDAY OF INVOCAVIT

The Sixth Day of Lent

6. *Evangelist:* So the band of soldiers and their captain

So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

Die Schar aber und der Oberhauptmann und die Diener der Jüden nahmen Jesum und bunden ihn und führten ihn aufs erste zu Hannas, der war Kaiphass Schwäher, welcher des Jahres Hoherpriester war. Es war aber Kaiphass, der den Jüden riet, es wäre gut, daß ein Mensch würde umbracht für das Volk.

A coalition of Roman and Temple guardsmen led Jesus from the garden back to Jerusalem. We then read that they led Jesus first to Annas, “the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year” (John 18:13). Why did they lead him first to Annas? And what was the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas, as well as the relationship between Judaism and the Roman empire?

Here is what we know for sure: Annas was a former high priest, father of five high priests, and the influential father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas. The curiosity of historians ancient and modern is compounded by the removal of Annas from his office by the Romans about fifteen years before Jesus’ arrest. Under normal circumstances high priests were appointed annually (John 11:49; 18:13). The simultaneous involvement of Annas and Caiaphas suggests that the Romans meddled in the appointment process. Moreover, Judaism had a high regard for patriarchy from Abraham to the present day, so it would not be surprising for them to consult the elder Annas before moving on to Caiaphas.

Even more important than these historical details, however, is how this scene benefits you and bears fruit in your life: “one man should die for the people” (John 18:14). You probably want to say, “Amen, Amen!”—but in agreement with a purpose that Caiaphas never imagined. As an opponent of Jesus, he spoke these words in an earlier exchange with some priests and Pharisees (John 11:46–50). They asked Caiaphas about Jesus’ miracles and how to respond to them, saying, “If we let [Jesus] go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:48). Caiaphas was encouraging a sacrifice of political expediency, rather than the all-atoning sacrifice. But again, his words are correct: one man will die for the sins of the people.

One is reminded here of the breastplate worn by the high priest of the Old Testament. Recall that the breastplate had twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel (Exod. 28:6–14). The twelve-stoned breastplate indicated that the Aaronic priest conducted the word and “sacraments” of the Old Testament for the people. The Old Testament liturgy was from God, by the priests, and for the people. In other words, it was from God, mediated by the priests, and for the salvation of God’s people. Especially on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), one man embodied every man as he entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood of the atonement for Israel. The author of Hebrews says that Christ, your great high priest, “entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

Listen for a large melodic leap up to the word “man” (*Mensch*), highlighting the importance of the one Christ. Also notice the dramatic slowing down on the verb “die” (*umbracht*), encouraging you to linger at the cross for a while this Lent.

*What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners’ gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain. (LSB 450.3)
Amen.*