

Exegetical Notes, John 18:12-23

“The Trials: Part # 1, Before Annas”

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John 18:12-23

Verses 12-14

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

- The office of High Priest was bought by the family of Annas from the Romans and passed between the members of that family. Annas had held the office himself from 6 to 15. Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, assumed the office from 18-36, but Annas remained the power behind the throne. So when Jesus was arrested, he was not taken directly to Caiaphas, who was only the puppet ruler, but to Annas first, because Annas was the real power.
- Caiaphas was the one with whom the reasoning for Jesus' death had been first brought forward. See John 11:49-50.

Verses 15-18

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

¹⁷ “You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter.

He replied, “I am not.”

¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

- Peter and another of Jesus' disciples, most likely John the author of the Gospel of John, followed the detachment of soldiers who had arrested Jesus to Annas' house.
- We do not understand the implications, but apparently the "other disciple" had some contact with Annas' household which gave him admission to it. The words used in verse 15 imply that the "other disciple" was an intimate of the household. He was so well recognized that he could also get Peter, a complete stranger, into the place.
- As the "other disciple" was bringing Peter into Annas' house, the servant girl who watched the door asked him if he was not a follower of Jesus. She may have surmised this because she recognized, from his way of dress or perhaps his accent, that Peter was a Galilean, like Jesus.
- Peter quickly denied that he knew Jesus and tried to blend in with the crowd.

Verses 19-21

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

²⁰ "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

- Annas, recognized again in this passage as the High Priest, even though he was not, asked Jesus questions about his associates and his teaching. He was seeking evidence from Jesus that would incriminate him.
- Jesus reminded Annas that he could not be required by law to give evidence against himself. He instructed Annas to find those who would incriminate him from those he had openly taught in the Temple.

Verses 22-23

When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

²³ "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

- One of those standing by, perhaps one of those who had brought Jesus to Annas, thought that Jesus had responded disrespectfully to Annas. He

slapped Jesus' face with his open hand and admonished Jesus for his attitude toward Annas.

- Striking a prisoner is also forbidden by Jewish law. Jesus reminded the person who struck him that they could testify against him but not abuse him physically.

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