

Our 40 Day Journey to the Cross

March 17-22

Day 11 Monday

John 11:45-57

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.

48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all,

50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”

51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,

52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?”

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

Joseph Caiaphas

Joseph Caiaphas was the high priest of Jerusalem during the ministry of Jesus Christ. As high priest and chief religious authority in the land, Caiaphas had many important responsibilities, including controlling the Temple treasury, managing the Temple police and other personnel, performing religious rituals, and--central to the passion story-- serving as president of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council and court that considered the case of Jesus.

The high priest had another, more controversial function in first-century Jerusalem: serving as a sort of liaison between Roman authority and the Jewish population. High priests, drawn from the Sadducean aristocracy, received their appointment from Rome since the time of Herod the Great, and Rome looked to high priests to keep the Jewish populace in line. Often Roman prefects would demand that high priests arrest and turn over Jews seen as agitators.

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, high priest from 6 to 15 C.E. and head of a family that would control the high priesthood for most of the first century. Annas is mentioned in gospels (**Luke 3:1-2, John 18:13-24**)

It is possible that he, as a high priest emeritus, might have served at the side of Caiaphas in the Sanhedrin called to resolve the fate of Jesus.

Although little is known of Caiaphas, historians infer from his long tenure as high priest, from 18 to 36 C.E., that he must have worked well with Roman authority. For ten years, Caiaphas served with Roman prefect (Governor) Pontius Pilate. The two presumably had a close relationship. It is likely that Caiaphas and Pilate had standing arrangements for how to deal with subversive persons such as Jesus.

Caiaphas saw Jesus as a threat to the existing religious order. He might have believed that if Jesus wasn't restrained or even executed that the Romans might end their relative tolerance of Jewish institutions.

High priests, including Caiaphas, were both respected and despised by the Jewish population. As the highest religious authority, they were seen as playing a critical role in religious life and the Sanhedrin. At the same time, however, many Jews resented the close relationship that high priest maintained with Roman authorities and suspected them of taking bribes or practicing other forms of corruption.

Unlike other Temple priests, Caiaphas, as a high priest, lived in Jerusalem's Upper City, a wealthy section inhabited by the city's powers-that-be. His home almost certainly was constructed around a large courtyard. In 1990 Archaeologists discovered a family tomb in Abu Tor two miles south of Jerusalem, an ossuary, or bone box, containing on its side the name of Joseph Caiaphas, written in Aramaic. The ossuary is assumed to be genuine.