

# The Gospel According To John

## Jesus' Trial, Peter's Denial

*John 18:12-27*

### **Introduction**

Christianity is built on the fact that Christ is glorious, God is holy, and man is sinful. We see both of these truths interwoven in this passage that unfolds two dramas - Jesus' trial and Peter's denial. The denial of Peter reveals the absolute need of Christ's atoning death, and contrasts Christ's faithfulness with man's unfaithfulness.

### **Jesus Before Annas Part 1 (v. 12-14)**

**The Binding** (v. 12) The multitude that has come to arrest Jesus provide a good illustration of the world's sin and rejection of Christ. Within this multitude there are Gentiles and Jews, the heathen and religious, soldiers and servants, and priests and Pharisees.

The binding of Jesus provides us with a picture. Psalm 118:27a says, "...bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." [See entire context]. When the sacrifice was given to the priest, it was bound. In Genesis 22:9, Isaac, who is a picture of Jesus Christ, was bound before he was to be sacrificed. By being bound, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament foreshadowing -- bound in preparation as a sin offering.

**Annas and Caiaphas** (v. 13-14) They aim to execute Jesus as a law-breaker, but if they understood the Law rightly, they would have become Jesus' followers.

Annas held the office of high priest from around AD 6-15 until he was deposed by Valerius Gratus (Pilate's predecessor). Thus, Annas was still the patriarch of the high priest family and no fewer than five of his sons and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, held the office at one time or another. The high priest was the head of the Sanhedrin. It would seem that many Jews would consider Annas to be the "real" high priest, even though, publicly, before the Romans, Caiaphas was high priest.

In John 11:47, Caiaphas met with his cronies and they talked about the tremendous problem of Jesus just prior to Jesus' triumphal entry. They had heard about Him raising Lazarus from the dead. Verses 49-50 say, "And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all [the council had suggested to leave Him alone and He would pass], 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.' He is saying, 'If we don't get rid of this Jesus, He's going to mess up the nation, we're going to have a revolution, and the Romans will come down and wipe out all of us. So what we ought to do is kill Jesus and save the nation.'"

Caiaphas didn't realize it, but he was speaking prophecy. John 11:51 says, "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." He opened up his hateful mouth, with nothing but his own political end in mind, and said, "We ought to kill Jesus because it's better for one man to die for the nation than for the whole nation to die." He didn't even know what he was saying. God was proclaiming a prophecy right through Caiaphas's own lips.

John makes reference to this in verse 14 to remind us who was really in control of the whole situation.

### **Peter's First Denial of Jesus (v. 15-18)**

Peter demonstrated great self-confidence in the Garden, but now he was blind-sided by this little girl. Once he began to lie here, he had too pride to stop. So he kept on lying throughout the evening. If the unnamed disciple is John, then the servant girl would have assumed that Peter was also a disciple of Jesus, for he came in with John. Her question presumes a negative answer, so she may have well been cynical.

In verse 18 we see Peter standing by the fire warming himself with the enemies of Jesus after having already denied Him.

### **Jesus Before Annas Part 2 (v. 19-24)**

The examination before Annas was a mockery of justice. It had already been decided that Jesus was going to die. It was only a matter of obtaining something to trap Him in so they could kill Him "legally". The leaders were motivated by envy, fear, and loss of power and position.

In those days, it was illegal to strike an accused individual. The phrase in verse 22 can be interpreted struck with his hand or a stick or club (see Micah 5:1). Micah called Jesus, "the Judge of Israel." Annas was playing judge, but Jesus Christ was the real judge. Jesus was so calm, so dignified, and so much in control in comparison to the frustrated henchman and the frustrated Annas. Jesus is clear and direct yet not rude. Just because someone is offended does not mean that you must apologize. In fact, if you have not sinned, it is wrong to ask for forgiveness.

Night proceedings were also not legal. Also, there had to be at least a two day interval from the end of the trial until the execution. Pride is blinding to one's own faults, but magnifies the faults of others. They wanted to finish the trial in the middle of the night when there weren't any witnesses. Eventually they did come up with some witnesses, but they were false witnesses (Mt. 26:60-61; Jn. 15:25b). These two men agreed He said that He was going to destroy the Temple (Mt. 26:60-61). They tried to convict Him on that, but they could not. Finally, they asked Him, "Are you the Messiah?" And He said, "Yes, I am the Messiah" (Mk. 14:61-62). Then the high priest tore his clothes and screamed, "Blasphemy!" The people began to spit all over Jesus, and they pushed, shoved, and slapped Him in the face and said, "Tell us who slapped You, Prophet?" So they abused Him (Mt. 26:65-68). Jesus, in great contrast to Peter, denies nothing.

If Jesus is to be brought before Pilate, the legal accusation must be brought by the reigning high priest, Caiaphas, for he is the reigning chairman of the Sanhedrin (v. 24).

### **Peter's Second and Third Denial of Jesus (v. 25-27)**

As they led Jesus out from Caiaphas, He passed Peter just at the moment the rooster crowed (Luke 22:60-62).

What is the difference between Judas and Peter (from a human point of view)? They were both sorrowful, but only one actually repented. *Luke 22:62, Matthew 27:3-10, John 21:15-19, 2 Corinthians 7:8-11*

There are so many things that Peter teaches us. We learn that the believer is weak. We learn the danger of self-confidence. We learn the consequence of prayerlessness (Peter should have been praying in the Garden instead of sleeping -- he might have been ready for the danger of evil company; Mt. 26:40-41). We learn the power of fear. We also see the beauty and the majesty of Jesus Christ. Praise God that this is not the final scene for Peter. The story continues where Jesus recovers Peter in John 21:15-17. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, and three times Peter has the privilege of saying, "I love You" -- one time for each of the occasions of his denial.

Question to consider: When you have fallen, why did you fail?