##### Caiaphas

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*Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*

*Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*

*He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.*

*So from that day on they plotted to take his life. Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.*

*When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.* John 11:47-57

## Background

It’s difficult to understand Caiaphas without first considering the high priest Annas, who established a dynasty that ruled Jewish temple life for decades. After Herod the Great died there was a leadership vacuum in Israel. Rome reluctantly accepted the priests as leaders. Rome listened to anyone who sent them enough money. Caesar Augustus personally appointed Annas as leader. Many considered Annas more powerful than Pontius Pilate.

This high priest controlled the worship center, all monies, and the work of 20,000 priests. Eight members of Annas’ family eventually held the supreme office of high priest (Annas, five sons, a grandson, and Caiaphas--the son-in-law).

Caiaphas had simply married the boss’s daughter. Even though Annas was retired, he was still the power behind the priestly throne that controlled political and religious events throughout Israel. Caiaphas may have been just a caretaker entrusted with maintaining the status quo till Annas’ family could resume control.

Jesus disrupted things by driving the moneychangers from the temple. Jesus was clearly a big threat to Caiaphas. It was all about money! The tables used by the moneychangers were called “the booths of Annas.” Modern archeology reveals that some priests had the richest homes in Jerusalem.

One wonders why Caiaphas even bothered to have a trial. From the offset we are told that he illegally planned to arrest Jesus and kill him (Matthew 26:4). Caiaphas was obviously more interested in results than any proper process. He invoked the term “God’s Law” while he imposed his own version of human justice.

Caiaphas may have considered himself a righteous man because he was protecting established ways. Caiaphas showed he had no scruples regarding his treatment of Jesus. An independent source (Josephus) indicates that there were many improprieties regarding Jesus’ trial:

* Tradition dictated the accused must be afforded a public hearing; Jesus was not.
* It was illegal to try a capital charge at night; Jesus was.
* It was illegal for Caiaphas to encourage a prisoner to convict himself; Jesus did.
* It was illegal to charge a man when the witnesses disagreed; they did.

Later Caiaphas would continue his persecution of Christ’s followers. Twice he presided over the examinations of the apostles regarding their preaching in the temple. On the advice of Gamaliel, he ordered that they be beaten, warned, and released (rather than killed). He presided at the trial of Stephen and approved his subsequent stoning. He commissioned Saul with letters of authority to persecute Christians as far as Damascus.

During the trial of Jesus, Caiaphas had shouted, “You know nothing at all” (John 11:49); and yet,

* Despite being the key religious leader of his time,
* despite talking directly with Jesus,
* despite the power of the resurrection, and
* despite witness of the apostles,
* Caiaphas just never got it. He loved power and position. He loved the established order. He just neglected to follow God.

Caiaphas may have been more fearful of Annas than obedient to the will of God. Caiaphas believed the ends justify the means. We should never break commandments (engage in lies and murder) in the name of God. Caiaphas should have held a mirror up to himself when he accused Jesus of blasphemy. Caiaphas was the one who took God’s name in vain. A priest is called to be a mediator between God and the people. Caiaphas betrayed his sacred duty.

The heart of true worship is total surrender to God. Caiaphas and Annas were upset because Jesus had upset financial matters in the temple. Jesus taught that we cannot serve both God and money. These temple leaders were serving a false god.

We are not certain about the derivation of the name Caiaphas. Some think it means “searcher.” That would be ironic. Caiaphas did not seek the truth. He thought he had all the answers. Ultimately, he knew nothing at all.

History teaches that those who surrender to God are sometimes asked to do unpopular, new, or unexpected things. The true test of God’s presence in our endeavors is the way we work and not what we accomplish. Many considered Jesus a heretic, a troublemaker, and a failure on the cross. In God’s kingdom, Jesus is the victor, the way, the truth, and the life.

**Enneagram connections: Three**

Caiaphas was a very low level three. Threes can have an entrepreneurial spirit that enables them to have great successes. Unfortunately, low level three can have a problem with the truth. Lies are easier. They can become ruthless and very competitive. Caiaphas was willing to say and do anything to protect a corrupt money-making machine, the temple sacrificial system. People were told to buy animals (in temple) with temple money (from money changers) to sacrifice animals to expiate their sins. Very similar to indulgences. Then the temple sold meat from sacrifices to general populaces as kosher meat. Profit in three negative ways.

A low level three can also be like a chameleon. They are willing to adopt false personas to succeed. Caiaphas was first temple leader in decades that was not blood relative of Anna. Caiaphas could have been willing to do anything; even causing the death of an innocent person. It has been said that low level 3’s are most likely to commit murder and low level 8’s are most likely to commit genocide.

49But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them*, “You know nothing at all! 50You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed*.”  John 11

The holy virtue for this type is truth. Unfortunately, Caiaphas chose self-deceit.

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## Questions

1. Consider these verses from Psalm 35. Why do the wicked persecute the righteous?

*Malicious witnesses rise-up; they ask me about things I do not know. They repay me evil for good; my soul is forlorn. But as for me, when they were sick, I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting. I prayed with head bowed on my bosom, as though I grieved for a friend or a brother; I went about as one who laments for a mother, bowed down and in mourning. But at my stumbling they gathered in glee, they gathered together against me; ruffians whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing; they impiously mocked more and more, gnashing at me with their teeth. How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages, my life from the lions! Then I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you.*

1. When, if ever, do the ends justify the means? Who is the ultimate judge of our lives?

3. The heart of true worship is total surrender to God. Caiaphas and Annas were upset because Jesus had upset

PILATE and Caiaphas

*They have brought this thing to pass—*

*That a Christ the Father gave,*

*Should be guest within a grave.*

*Church and State have willed to last*

*This tyranny not over-past;*

*His dark southern Brows around*

*They a wreath of briars have bound,*

*In His dark despiséd Hands*

*Writ in sores their writing stands.*

*By strait starlit ways I creep,*

*Caring while the careless sleep,*

*Bearing balms, and flow’rs to crown*

*That poor Head the stone holds down,*

*Through some crack or crevice dim*

*I would reach my sweets to Him.*

*Easter suns they rise and set,*

*But that stone is steadfast yet:*

*Past my lifting ’tis but I*

*When ’tis lifted would be nigh.*

*I believe, whate’er they say,*

*The sun shall dance an Easter Day,*

*And I that through thick twilight grope*

*With balms of faith, and flow’rs of hope,*

*Shall lift mine eyes and see that stone*

*Stir and shake, if not be gone.*

The Black Christ *by* Arthur Shearly Cripps (b. 1869)

*(At Easter in South Africa)*