

Bible Stories for Adults

Jesus Before the High Priest

Matthew 26:57-68

Opening

- Gathering: What kinds of things do people put before God?
- Today's Focus: Jewish leaders went through the motions of a trial to find a reason to execute Jesus rather than to find the truth.
- Key Verses: *You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.* John 11:50

"If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."
Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe Me." Luke 22:67

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Jerusalem Attitudes Towards Jesus (*John 12:12-19, 37-43*)

- How did people in Jerusalem feel about the Galilean rabbi who came to celebrate Passover?
John 12:12-13 = Welcomed with great fanfare on *Palm Sunday*
- What event preceding Jesus' arrival helped His fame spread in Jerusalem?
John 12:17-18 = Raised Lazarus from dead, many people came out to see Him
- How did the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem feel about Jesus' popularity?
John 12:19 = Frustrated that their enemy was popular
- Why didn't the Jewish leaders believe in Jesus even after seeing His miraculous signs?
John 12:37-40 = Fulfilled Isaiah's prophesy of blinded eyes and deadened hearts
- Certainly a few leaders believed. Did any of them try to convince the others?
John 12:42-43 = Silent - *they loved praise from men more than praise from God*

The Sanhedrin - The highest leadership council of the Jews

- 70 select leaders (chief priests, scribes and elders) plus high priest appointed for life
Numbers 11:16-17 = Patterned after 70 elders God chose to help Moses
- Given civil powers from Rome; Final court of appeal for Mosaic law
Power to execute until 30AD; Death sentence then needed Roman okay (*John 18:31*)

Better That One Man Die for the People (*John 11:47-53*)

- Were the Jewish leaders afraid that Jesus would upset God and bring His wrath?
John 11:47-48 = They were afraid He'd upset the Romans and they'd lose their place
- What did the leader of the Sadducees say in selfishness that prophesied of Jesus' purpose?
John 11:49-50 = *Better for you that one man die ... than that the whole nation perish*
- How could Caiaphas coincidentally say something so pointing?
John 11:51 = *He did not say this on his own*, God led him to prophesy ignorantly
- Did John feel anything needed to be added to Caiaphas' prophesy for the Jewish nation?
John 11:52 = Jesus would die for all of God's people, not just Jews
- Did anything result from this meeting of the Sanhedrin?
John 11:53 = *From that day on they plotted to take his life*

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We've Got Him! (*John 18:1-12*)

How were the Jewish leaders finally able to find Jesus without having a crowd around?

John 18:1-3 = Judas took temple soldiers to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
Was Jesus expecting them?

John 18:4-5 = Yes, He went out to greet them and introduced Himself
Knowing what lay ahead for Him, what was Jesus most concerned about? = Matthew 26:56
John 18:8-9 = The well-being of His disciples, even though they would fall away
Since Jesus was so cooperative, did the soldiers just ask Jesus to come with them?
John 18:12 = No, they arrested and bound Him

Annas, the High Priest Emeritus (*John 18:12-14*)

Where did the temple police take Jesus?

John 18:13 = To Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest
Why did they take Him to the High Priest's father-in-law instead of the High Priest himself?
Luke 3:2 = Annas and Caiaphas were both considered High Priest - Shows power of Annas

Annas - High priest from 6 to 15 AD

Considered by Jews as true high priest since appointment was for life by Jewish law
Acts 4:6 = Annas even called High Priest by Luke after Jesus ascended
Romans auctioned the High Priesthood
Found it more profitable to direct the high priest than to be the high priest
Had Romans appoint his 5 sons, a son-in-law (Caiaphas) and a grandson as HP
Lived in the palace of the high priest - large building with central courtyard
Extremely wealthy - Owned famous Bazaars of Annas
Had monopoly on sale of sacrifice animals and on stalls for moneychangers
Jesus' cleansing of the temple would have been seen as a threat to Annas
Given great power by Romans because he gave money to key Roman leaders
Used by later Jewish historians as example of a corrupt high priest

Would Annas have any trouble getting his son-in-law to get rid of this Jesus?

John 18:14 = No, Caiaphas had said it better for one man to die for the people

Preliminary Hearing Before Annas (*John 18:19-24*)

What kind of information did Annas want from Jesus? = Illegal - witnesses first to establish guilt
John 18:19 = Size of His following and a blasphemous and punishable secret belief

What secret ideas did Jesus reveal to Annas?
John 18:20-21 = There were none, Jesus always spoke openly, Others will agree
What was significant about Jesus' response?
Isaiah 45:19; 48:16 = Fulfilled prophecy about speaking truth openly, no secrets

How did the Jewish leaders feel about Jesus standing up for His truth before Annas?

John 18:22 = Frustrated at losing argument, one hit Jesus in the face

How did Jesus use this violent action to further demonstrate His truth?

John 18:23 = If I'm wrong, tell me how. If I'm not wrong, why did you hit me?

What did Annas do when it became obvious that Jesus was too wise for Him to handle?

John 18:24 = Sent Him to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, at least 1:00 am

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Witnesses (*Matthew 26:57-59*)

Would Jesus find justice and protection of the innocent before the Sanhedrin?

Matthew 26:57, 59 = No, they had already decided His sentence, needed a reason
Couldn't the Sanhedrin make any ruling they wanted? What kind of evidence did they need?

Deuteronomy 17:6 = Needed 2 or more witnesses to sentence someone to death
As active as Jesus had been, how many sets of witnesses came forward with stories?

Matthew 26:60a = Many came forward, none that confirmed each other
By pushing hard for anything that could convict Jesus, what commandment did they break?

Exodus 20:16 = # 8 - *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*

A Convicting Threat (*Matthew 26:60-61*)

Was the Sanhedrin ever able to find two people who agreed on incriminating evidence? = Didn't agree

Mark 14:56-59 (*Matthew 26:60b-61*) = Kind of, said He threatened to destroy the new temple
Had Jesus made such a threat?

John 2:18-20 = He had said He would raise in 3 days the temple THEY destroyed
Was Jesus even speaking of the same temple?

John 2:21-22 = No, He was speaking of His body
Had the Jewish leaders just misunderstood what Jesus had said?

Matthew 27:62-63 = No, they proved later that they understood what He meant

Let's Try This (*Matthew 26:62-64*)

Knowing that the leaders really understood what He had said, how did Jesus respond?

Matthew 26:62-63a = He didn't say anything, This frustrated Caiaphas
What prophesy did Jesus' response begin to fulfill?

Isaiah 53:7 = *Led like a lamb to the slaughter... He did not open His mouth*

Realizing this twisted evidence didn't really stand up, what did Caiaphas try?

Matthew 26:63b = He directly asked Jesus if He was the Messiah, God's Son
What was the purpose of Caiaphas saying, *I charge you under oath by the living God?*

Leviticus 5:1 = It forced Jesus to say something
How did Jesus point out that they already knew and had rejected His answer?

Luke 22:67-68 = If I tell you, you won't believe - You know, but won't admit it
How did Jesus then answer Caiaphas' question even deeper than they expected?

Matthew 26:64 = *You said it... You'll see proof when I return on God's right hand*
What prophesy would they immediately connect with what Jesus said?

Daniel 7:13-14 (*Psalm 110:1*) = Son of Man would come on clouds of heaven and be given all

Guilty! (*Matthew 26:65-68*)

How did the Sanhedrin react to Jesus' reply?

Matthew 26:65-66 = Here's our evidence! We've got plenty of witnesses now
How serious was a charge of blaspheme by calling one's self God?

Leviticus 24:14-16 = Punishable by death
How did Caiaphas show he was trying to convict Jesus rather than keep God's Law?

Leviticus 21:10 = High priest was never allowed to tear his clothes

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The Waiting Room (*Luke 22:63-65*)

After finding Jesus guilty of blasphemy, what was the next step to have Him executed?

Matthew 27:1-2 = Get the approval of the Roman procurator

How did Jesus and His guards pass time while waiting to get an audience with Pilate the governor?

Luke 22:63-65 (Matthew 26:67-68) = They mocked, beat and insulted Him

What passion prophesy did this begin to fulfill?

Isaiah 50:6 = He offered Himself to beating, mocking and abuse

The Illegal Trial (*Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 18*) = Laws the Jews had for themselves

Innocent until proven guilty?

Mark 14:1-2 = They had decided he would die before any charge could be found

Religious leaders carefully screen witnesses to ensure justice

Mark 14:55-57 = Look for false witnesses against Jesus, anyone to condemn Him

Capital cases must begin with reasons for acquittal

Luke 22:66-67 = Immediately began looking for ways to convict Jesus

In capital cases, all can argue for acquittal but not all can argue for conviction

Mark 14:55 = Whole Sanhedrin tried to convict, no defense sought or allowed

Capital trials must be held in the daytime and verdicts reached in the daytime

John 18:28 = Trial held, verdict given before dawn - in a hurry to finish before crowds awoke

Capital verdicts for acquittal could come the same day, conviction not until the next day

Mark 14:64; 15:1 = Convicted within same half day (or less)

Serious charges are to be tried only in the Sanhedrin's regular temple meeting place

Luke 22:54 = Both trials took place in the high priest's palace

Defendants are not required to incriminate themselves

Matthew 26:63-65 = Jesus forced under oath, then incriminated for answer

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. Am I a Christian because people around me are Christian or because of my relationship with Jesus? How would my relationship with Jesus be different if those around me were not Christians? (*John 18:19; Genesis 6:5-9; 1 Kings 19:9-10; Isaiah 51:2; Daniel 6:6-11*)
2. How openly do I speak to others about Jesus? (*John 18:20-21; Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 4:18-20; 18:24-28; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 3:15*)
3. When have I allowed Satan to frustrate me so much that I did something I later regretted? (*John 18:22-23; Numbers 20:2-13; Job 2:7-10; Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:3-6*)
4. When have I given false testimony against my neighbor? (*Matthew 26:59-62; Exodus 20:16; Job 13:4; Psalm 5:9; 28:3; 55:20-21; 109:1-5; Jeremiah 9:3-6; Ezekiel 13:3-9*)
5. When have I wanted something so bad that I resorted to sin to get it? (*Matthew 26:59-68; Genesis 3:27; 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 11:1-13*)