



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #305 Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement

Jesus' Three-Phase Jewish Trial

Phase I of the Jewish Trial: Before Annas

JN 18.12-14, 19-23

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12 ^JWhen 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 counseled the Jewish leaders that it would be best if one man died for the people.

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

20 *"I have spoken openly to the world, without changing my message," 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."*

22 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, "I command you to testify as to what is wrong. But since I spoke the truth, why are you beating me?"*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The House of Annas, Father-in-Law of Caiaphas
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus' Three-Phase Jewish Trial
Title	Phase I of the Jewish Trial: Before Annas

The flow of events related to Jesus' arrest, trials, and crucifixion show the great value of blending all the information from the parallel gospel accounts into one narrative. Each of the gospel writers selected the information that best served their own perspective on the life of Jesus, and their target audience, then they arranged it accordingly. Therefore, each gospel contains different pieces of the complete story of Jesus, like a puzzle.

The Jewish and Roman trials of Jesus are a case in point. When we harmonize all the accounts the 3-phase development of each trial becomes clear, and all the details in each gospel come alive in a new way. Apparent contradictions between the accounts are resolved with amazing clarity as all the pieces fit perfectly into place.

Today's reading covers the first phase of Jesus' Jewish trial, before Annas. Jesus was led from the Garden of Gethsemane to Annas' house, where some of the Sanhedrin--the ruling council of Israel--were assembled. Annas was a former High Priest, and the father-in-law of the current High Priest, Caiaphas. He was a very powerful man, who pulled many of the strings of the political life of the nation from behind the scenes, and had great influence with his son-in-law, Caiaphas as well. Annas began the process of gathering testimony against Jesus that would continue in the second phase of the trial, later in the night.

When questioned by Annas, Jesus answered with essentially the same thing he had said earlier at Gethsemane, after his arrest. He had always taught publicly in the Temple--especially on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday of Passion Week. Annas and the rest of the Sanhedrin had heard Jesus speak by the hour over those three days. They heard nothing worthy of accusation.

Jesus was pointing this out with biting sarcasm when he said: **"Why ask me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."** Annas, and all the members of the Sanhedrin who were present knew full well that Jesus was talking about them.

Jesus was making the point that this "trial" was bogus from the beginning. It was not about the truth, but a vendetta to create an excuse to kill him. Justice had nothing to do with these proceedings, as the beating Jesus received proved.

When one of the officials slapped Jesus for alleged disrespect towards the High Priest, Jesus confronted him with the truth. The Lord gave the official a command to show what he had done to deserve a beating. Once again, Jesus was under arrest, but he maintained his authority.

The Jewish law forbade the beating of an accused person during a trial. Yet, the first of many blows had been struck. Many breaches of justice like this one would follow on this dark night.

APPLICATION:

Jesus hated hypocrisy in every form. He had confronted the Pharisees in particular with their spiritual and religious hypocrisy many times. Now, in this "trial" Jesus was the target of judicial hypocrisy. The Jewish leadership used the format of a trial to railroad Jesus with lies, insults, abuse, and violations of their own laws. It was pure hypocrisy. Jesus was the only truth present in this travesty of justice.

The truth is usually not welcome among us sinners. We try to manipulate reality with our words and rationale all the time. Justice is the victim. This is why God alone is capable of true judgement, and justice. It is a very good thing that Jesus is the appointed Judge.

Because the Trinity is love, truth and justice matter. In spite of our sinfulness, we are called by Jesus to forgo judging others, and to be just and truthful in our dealings. The failure to be just was one of the most prominent sins pointed out by the Old Testament prophets.

Do you ever use words to manipulate your version of reality?

How does justice suffer in the way you treat others? In how you talk about them? What do you need to change? When will you begin?

What injustice do you need to confront in Jesus' name?