



Caiaphas
Leader of the Sadducees

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Overview:

CAIAPHAS POLICY WAS TO REMOVE ALL THREATS TO HIS POWER

Caiaphas was the leader of the religious group called the Sadducees. Educated and wealthy, they were politically influential in the nation.

As the elite group, they were on fairly good terms with Rome.

They hated Jesus because he endangered their secure life-styles and taught a message they could not accept.

A kingdom in which leaders served had no appeal to them. Caiaphas's usual policy was to remove any threats to his power by whatever means necessary.

For Caiaphas, whether Jesus should die was not in question; the only point to be settled was when his death should take place.

Not only did Jesus have to be captured and tried; the Jewish council also needed Roman approval before they could carry out the death sentence.

Caiaphas's plans were unexpectedly helped by Judas's offer to betray Christ.

Caiaphas did not realize that his schemes were actually part of a plan God was carrying out.

Caiaphas's willingness to sacrifice another man to preserve his own security was clearly selfish.

By contrast, Jesus' willingness to die for us was a clear example of loving Self-sacrifice.

Caiaphas thought he had won the battle as Jesus hung on the cross, but he did not count on the resurrection!

Caiaphas's mind was closed. He couldn't accept the resurrection even when the evidence was overwhelming, and he attempted to silence those whose lives had been forever changed by the risen Christ (Matthew 28:12, 13).

Matthew 28:12-13

And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

Caiaphas represents those people who will not believe because they think it will cost them too much to accept Jesus as Lord.

They choose the fleeting power, prestige, and pleasures of this life instead of the eternal life God offers those who receive his Son. What is your choice?

Key verses: “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’ ” (John 11:49-50).

Caiaphas was the High Priest

Luke 3:2

Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living out in the wilderness.

John the Baptist's Ministry

The scope and design of John's ministry were, to bring the people from their sins, and to their Saviour. He came preaching, not a sect, or party, but a profession; the sign or ceremony was washing with water.

By the words here used John preached the necessity of repentance, in order to the remission of sins, and that the baptism of water was an outward sign of that inward cleansing and renewal of heart, which attend, or are the effects of true repentance, as well as a profession of it.

Here is the fulfilling of the Scriptures, Isa 40:3, in the ministry of John.

Isaiah 40:3 Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, "Make a highway for the Lord through the wilderness. Make a straight, smooth road through the desert for our God.

A way is made for the gospel into the heart, by taking down high thoughts, and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by levelling the soul, and removing all that hinders us in the way of Christ and his grace, then preparation is made to welcome the salvation of God.

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas

John 18:13

First they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.

Christ before Annas and Caiaphas

Simon Peter denied his Master. The particulars have been noticed in the remarks on the other Gospels.

If a call to expose ourselves to danger be clear, we may hope God will enable us to honour him; if it be not, we may fear that God will leave us to shame ourselves.

They said nothing concerning the miracles of Jesus, by which he had done so much good, and which proved his doctrine.

Thus the enemies of Christ, whilst they quarrel with his truth, willfully shut their eyes against it.

He appeals to those who heard him. The doctrine of Christ may safely appeal to all that know it, and those who judge in truth bear witness to it.

Prophecies concerning Jesus

John 11:49-51

And one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "How can you be so stupid? Why should the whole nation be destroyed? Let this one man die for the people."

This prophecy that Jesus should die for the entire nation came from Caiaphas in his position as high priest.

The Pharisees Consult against Jesus

There can hardly be a clearer discovery of the madness that is in man's heart, and of its desperate enmity against God, than what is here recorded.

Words of prophecy in the mouth, are not clear evidence of a principle of grace in the heart.

The calamity we seek to escape by sin, we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; as those do who think by opposing Christ's kingdom, to advance their own worldly interest.

The fear of the wicked shall come upon them. The conversion of souls is the gathering of them to Christ as their ruler and refuge; and he died to effect this.

By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them: his love in dying for believers should unite them closely together.

Jesus tried before Caiaphas

Matthew 26:2-3

"As you know, the Passover celebration begins in two days, and I, the Son of Man, will be betrayed and crucified."

At that same time the leading priests and other leaders were meeting at the residence of Caiaphas, the high priest,

Our Lord had often told of his sufferings as at a distance, now he speaks of them as at hand. At the same time the Jewish council consulted how they might put him to death secretly.

But it pleased God to defeat their intention. Jesus, the true paschal Lamb, was to be sacrificed for us at that very time, and his death and resurrection rendered public.

Matthew 26:57

Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of religious law and other leaders had gathered.

Matthew 26:63-65

But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God that you tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. And in the future you will see me, the Son of Man, sitting at God's right hand in the place of power and coming back on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror, shouting, "Blasphemy! Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy."

Christ trial before Caiaphas

Jesus was hurried into Jerusalem. It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those who are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so.

Here began Peter's denying him: for to follow Christ afar off, is to begin to go back from him.

It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to ask what the end will be.

The event is God's, but the duty is ours. Now the Scriptures were fulfilled, which said, false witnesses are risen up against me.

Christ was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, let us remember we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

When Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak.

Hitherto Jesus had seldom professed expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine spoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make an open confession of it.

It would have looked like declining his sufferings. He thus confessed, as an example and encouragement to his followers, to confess him before men, whatever hazard they ran.

Cruel mocking, and abhorrence, are the sure portion of the disciple as they were of the Master, from such as would buffet and deride the Lord of glory.

These things were exactly foretold in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah. Let us confess Christ's name, and bear the reproach, and he will confess us before his Father's throne.

Annas, bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas

John 18:24-28

Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire, they asked him again, "Aren't you one of his disciples?" "I am not," he said.

But one of the household servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go in themselves because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover feast.

Art thou the King of the Jews? Messiah the Prince; art thou he? Dost thou call thyself so, and wouldest thou be thought so?

Christ answered this question with another; not for evasion, but that Pilate might consider what he did.

He never took upon him any earthly power, never were any traitorous principles or practices laid to him.

Christ gave an account of the nature of his kingdom.

Its nature is not worldly; it is a kingdom within men, set up in their hearts and consciences; its riches spiritual, its power spiritual, and its glory within.

Its supports are not worldly; its weapons are spiritual; it needed not, nor used, force to maintain and advance it, nor opposed any kingdom but that of sin and Satan. Its object and design are not worldly.

Peter and other disciples are also accused before Caiaphas

Acts 4:1-22

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the leading priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees came over to them. They were very disturbed that Peter and John were claiming, on the authority of Jesus, that there is a resurrection of the dead.

They arrested them and, since it was already evening, jailed them until morning. But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers totaled about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest.

They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Leaders and elders of our nation, are we being questioned because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed?"

Let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, the man you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.'

There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men who had had no special training. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say. So they sent Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves.

"What should we do with these men?" they asked each other. "We can't deny they have done a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.

But perhaps we can stop them from spreading their propaganda. We'll warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again." So they called the apostles back in and told them never again to speak or teach about Jesus.

But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard."

The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

Peter and John Imprisoned

The apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. It includes all the happiness of the future state; this they preached through Jesus Christ, to be had through him only. Miserable is their case, to whom the glory of Christ's kingdom is a grief; for since the glory of that kingdom is everlasting, their grief will be everlasting also.

The harmless and useful servants of Christ, like the apostles, have often been troubled for their work of faith and labour of love, when wicked men have escaped.

The Apostles Boldly Testify of Christ

Peter being filled with the Holy Ghost, would have all to understand, that the miracle had been wrought by the name, or power, of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, whom they had crucified; and this confirmed their testimony to his resurrection from the dead, which proved him to be the Messiah.

These rulers must either be saved by that Jesus whom they had crucified, or they must perish forever.

The name of Jesus is given to men of every age and nation, as that whereby alone believers are saved from the wrath to come.

But when covetousness, pride, or any corrupt passion, rules within, men shut their eyes, and close their hearts, in enmity against the light; considering all as ignorant and unlearned, who desire to know nothing in comparison with Christ crucified.

And the followers of Christ should act so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, and raises them above this world.

Peter and John Refuse to Be Silenced

All the care of the rulers is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people, yet they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason; that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny.

The apostles look with concern on perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore they are faithful in warning, and showing the right way.

None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly, untill they have learned to guide their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of a vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; the end will be, you can serve neither fully.

The Believers Unite in Prayer and Praise

Christ's followers do best in company, provided it is their own company.

It encourages God's servants, both in doing work, and suffering work, that they serve the God who made all things, and therefore has the disposal of all events; and the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

Jesus was anointed to be a Saviour, therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin. But sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it.

In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may go on with cheerfulness and courage in our work and duty.

God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, [Isa 1:7](#).

Isaiah 1:7

Your country lies in ruins, and your cities are burned. As you watch, foreigners plunder your fields and destroy everything they see.

Life Application:

Caiaphas represents those people who will not believe because they think it will cost them too much to accept Jesus as Lord. They choose the fleeting power, prestige, and pleasures of this life instead of the eternal life God offers those who receive his Son. What is your choice?

Key verses: “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’ ” (John 11:49-50).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry’s Concept Bible Commentary.