

## **Kangaroo Court: The Illegal Arraignment of Jesus Christ**

**John 18:12-24**

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Well Jonathan read for us this morning the account of our Lord's entry into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. I'm not going to go to the events of Palm Sunday today, because in our study of Mark, coming up in just a week or so, we're going to get to that event in the Gospel of Mark. What I want to do today instead is take us forward a few days to late Thursday night early Friday morning of the Passion Week of our Lord. There we find events that are deeply, deeply troubling.

It was in 1853 that a new expression was used, or at least recorded for the first time. Those who keep track of such things tell us that that expression actually was used first, or recorded first at least, here in the great state of Texas. That expression was kangaroo court. It has the idea of justice, not proceeding slowly and carefully and deliberately but instead of justice leaping and passing those things that ought to be done, like a kangaroo leaping to conclusions, leaping to sentence and execution without a deliberate pace of justice. So it came to be used really that term kangaroo court, of any court where a fair trial becomes virtually impossible, where there is a serious breach of justice. God, of course, demands justice of all human judges. There are many passages throughout the prophets in which the children of Israel are accused of the lack of justice in the land.

It all goes back though really to Deuteronomy 16 when Moses told the people how things were to be done. In Deuteronomy 16, verse 18, he says, “You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” Moses, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, laid out a judicial system in which justice was to be the rule of the land. Those commands that were given in Deuteronomy, those legal principles of due process, were still very much affirmed in the first century. Tragically, they weren't always followed, and they were not followed in the trial of our Lord. It was in every sense a kangaroo court, beginning as we will learn today with His arraignment.

I want you to turn with me to John chapter 18. John 18 and I'll begin reading in verse 12. Only John records this account. He writes, “So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” John 18, verse 14,

“Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people. Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Then slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.” When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying,

“Is that the way You answer the high priest?” Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?” So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”

The story of Jesus' arrest and His arraignment and the trials that ensued really reads like a sort of modern, crime drama. It's filled with seedy characters, with an innocent victim, with unlikely witnesses, and frankly huge political intrigue. Sadly, it is also the story of an abuse of power and a gross miscarriage of justice.

Let me briefly summarize the events of that night, Thursday night from the arrest leading to the crucifixion the next morning. Jesus' legal ordeal began with the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, probably around midnight on Thursday night. The arrest was followed by a series of hearings and trials. First there were three Jewish trials or ecclesiastical trials as they're sometimes referred to. The first was what I've just read to you, the arraignment before Annas somewhere around midnight or 1 am on Friday morning. That was followed shortly by an informal hearing or trial before Caiaphas and a quorum of the Sanhedrin, probably around 2 am on that Friday morning. Shortly after dawn, somewhere around 5 to 5:30 the Sanhedrin reconvened, this time in their official capacity, in their normal place of meeting for a formal trial and conviction. And frankly it was just that, a formality, a foregone conclusion. The verdict had already been arrived at.

The charge in these three Jewish trials was blasphemy. In the second trial that becomes obvious and comes out; you can read about it in Matthew 26. The same charge of blasphemy was brought forth at the formal Jewish proceeding by the Sanhedrin just after daybreak. In fact, turn back to Luke 22, and you'll see this charge come out. Luke 22, verse 66: “When it was day.” So now we're at the third phase of the Jewish trial, around 5 or 5:30 in the morning. “the council of the elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, “If You are the Christ,” if You're the Messiah, “tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” And they all said, “Are You the Son of God. Then?” Is that what You're claiming? “And He said to them, “Yes, I

am.” Then they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.” He has blasphemed God. He is worthy of the death penalty. That was the accusation in the Jewish phase of the trials.

As a result of that verdict, reached shortly after sunrise on Friday morning, they took Jesus to Pilate. Now why would they do this? Because under Roman law, the Sanhedrin was not allowed to put anyone to death. And so to get Jesus executed, two things had to change. First of all the jurisdiction had to change. The Romans had to be involved, because only they could execute the death penalty. And secondly, the specific charge had to change, because the Romans were not about to put someone to death for blaspheming against the Jewish God and religion.

So, between the third trial and arriving at Pilate's palace, they come up with another charge. They completely change the charge against Jesus to sedition. You can see this in chapter 23 of Luke. Notice verse 2. When they brought Him to Pilate, “they began to accuse Him.” And here was the accusation: “We found this man misleading our nation forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar” That's rebellion against Caesar's authority, “and saying that He Himself is” Messiah, “a King” and that His authority is greater than Caesar's is the idea there. Go down to verse 5: “They kept on insisting, saying, “He stirs up the people.” He's involved in sedition! Pilate got it. Verse 14, when he later tries to seek Jesus' release, he says to them, “You brought this man to me” watch this, “as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man in regarding the charges which you make against Him.”

So, within the next three to four hours, from their arriving at Pilate's, depending on exactly when sunrise occurs that day, there were three Roman trials as well. From sometime around 6 am to 9 am, there were three quick in succession Roman trials, or civil trials as these are called. The first one before Pilate, the second one before Herod, because when Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee and under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Jesus, really just across the courtyard to where Herod was staying who was there in Jerusalem for Passover. Herod questioned Jesus, but he refused to hear the case, sent Jesus back to Pilate. And that brings the third Roman trial when before Pilate Jesus is again declared innocent, but then unjustly and summarily condemned to death. By 9 am the soldiers had executed the sentence of death against Jesus, the sentence of

crucifixion.

I want to go back though to really the first of these legal events. Only John gives us insight into what happened right after Jesus' arrest at the first Jewish trial. It was a kind of preliminary hearing. Under Jewish law it was supposed to have been His legal arraignment, but whatever else it may have been, it was clearly a travesty of justice.

Now, as the story begins to unfold before us, we first see the circumstances of Jesus' arrest in verses 12 to 14. Notice verse 12: "So the Roman cohort and the commander of the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him." Here in summary is what happened in or just outside the Garden of Gethsemane, probably a private, walled garden where Jesus and His disciples often went, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, just to the east of the city wall of Jerusalem. Judas knew the place. He had been there with the disciples, and he'd led a large group of people there and they're discussed here in verse 12. "The officers of the Jews." That refers to the temple guard, sort of temple police, Jewish men under the control of the Jewish aristocracy and the high priests. But, it wasn't just the Jewish officers, the police officers, the Jewish leaders were very much afraid of what might happen when they sent to arrest Jesus, because obviously Jesus was very popular with the people. They knew this. Also, in Jerusalem it is Passover time. Historians tell us that at least 200,000 additional people swelled the population of Jerusalem at Passover time. Many of them would have come from Galilee where Jesus was far more popular. And so they were very concerned about what might happen when they sent to arrest Jesus. So they ask Pilate to send a contingent of Roman soldiers along to actually make the arrest.

Now every year at feast times, when all the Jews were supposed to gather in Jerusalem, the Romans brought from the coast over at Caesarea an extra number of soldiers, another contingent of soldiers that were temporarily added to the troops who were permanently stationed there at the Fortress Antonia on the side of the Temple Mount. John tells us that Pilate sent a cohort of Roman soldiers. Now, a cohort usually refers to about 600 troops. But that same Greek word can also be used for a smaller contingent, and is, in secular literature; could have been a contingent of about 200 soldiers.

John adds that the temple guard and these Roman soldiers were also accompanied by “the commander.” Literally, the chiliarch, the ruler of a thousand or as it was described in normal Latin, the tribune. He was the man responsible for the entire unit of 600 soldiers. So he was a man of great authority and responsibility. Luke adds that some of the chief priests, some of the Sanhedrin, accompanied this crowd as well. So here is this group of some 2 to 300 people at least that shows up in the garden, and the Roman soldiers arrest Jesus. John mentions that as was probably typical in the first century, and is even is typical often in our day, at His arrest they “bound Him.”

Verse 13 says, “And they led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” Now look first at the end of that verse. We learn that all of this happened, all of the events of the Passion Week occurred, while Caiaphas was high priest. The position of the high priest in Israel had become a political prize. When the Romans took over, they began to give this position of high priest to the one they thought could best satisfy the people and keep them in line. But there also came to be, just before the birth of our Lord actually, a very seedy side of the process of selecting a high priest. Historians tell us that it was essentially purchased. It wasn't put in that terms, it was leased to the highest, qualified bidder for an annual fee. So the office of high priest under the Romans was essentially an office that the wealthy controlled. They leased the privilege, if they were qualified of course. They had to be from the right tribe, but if they were qualified, they could bid toward controlling that office. From the time of Herod the Great, through 70 AD and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, there were 25 high priests. Twenty-two of them came from four wealthy, influential families.

None of those powerful families was more powerful than the family into which Caiaphas had married. His father-in-law, John tells us, was a man named Annas. Ironically, Annas' name in Hebrew is Hananiah, which means “Yahweh is gracious.” He was anything but that. Annas had already served as high priest. He served as high priest from the year 6 AD to 15 AD. But when the Romans deposed him, his influence didn't go away. After Annas was deposed, five of his sons, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and eventually one of his grandsons, would serve as high priest of Israel. Caiaphas, who was the current high priest, had served as high priest for about 18 years, from 18 AD through 36 AD. But it is very clear in both the biblical record and the secular record

that Caiaphas, who had married into this powerful family, was simply a pawn in the hands of his powerful father-in-law Annas. He answered to Annas. Annas was without a question the most influential, the most powerful man in all of Israel at the time. He was famously wealthy. Most of his wealth came from license fees and commissions from the money changers and those who sold sacrificial animals to worshipers in the temple. They would jack up the prices, particularly at Passover time and other times of feasting, and he got his own very good cut off the top of all of those things that happened and were sold there in the temple. Annas—when you think of Annas, think godfather. He was like the godfather of a quasi-legal, crime syndicate.

So, they first bring Jesus to Annas, the real power in Israel at the time. But John wants to be clear that Jesus cannot expect to get a fair trial here, so he mentions that Annas is the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest. And then notice what he adds in verse 14. “Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.” You see, six weeks before these events, six weeks before, after the raising of Lazarus, Caiaphas had convened a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin, the 71 men who were Israel's supreme, governing body. He had convened them, and out of political expediency, together they had decided, six weeks before that Jesus had to die. Look back at chapter 11 of John. John 11, verse 49, you can read about this. Here's this secret meeting, and we're given insight into it.

“But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient (literally, it is profitable) for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

You hear what he's saying? He's saying, listen, if one innocent man has to die to save the entire nation from destruction, so be it. But he uses the sacrificial language of the Old Testament. The basic idea of what Caiaphas said is this: Jesus has got to be sacrificed like the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement.

But at the same time that Caiaphas is really explaining his wicked scheme to murder Jesus, God directs Caiaphas to use words that have an altogether different meaning. Look at verse 51:

“Now he did this not on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only,

but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

Jesus was going to die, and He was going to die in place of the nation. Caiaphas meant to save the nation politically; God meant to save individuals within the nation spiritually. So, verse 53: “From that day on they planned together to kill Him.” That was some six weeks to two months before. So John has clued us in then, back in chapter 18, that Jesus cannot expect His arraignment before Annas to go well.

Now, I'm going to essentially skip over verses 15 to 18. And the reason I'm going to do that is because John, in his gospel, does what he does in his letters. It's kind of a spiral arrangement. He sort of looks at one theme, and then he moves around and looks at another theme, and comes back and looks at the first theme again. Through the nighttime Jewish trials of Jesus, John here moves the spotlight back and forth between two dramas that are developing: the first drama is the drama of Jesus' trials; the second drama is what's happening with Peter and his denials of Christ. At some point, Lord willing, we will study that second stage the drama of Peter and his denials. But today I instead want to focus on the first drama, the first stage: Jesus before His Jewish accusers. But the one important point I want you to see in verse's 15 to 18 is this. Peter and probably John here, is who this other disciple is, Peter and John witnessed that this hearing took place. And John and Jesus, at least, and perhaps Peter, could all testify of what was done, what was said, during this arraignment.

Now if all you knew was the circumstances of Jesus' arrest, you might wonder what kind of a horrible criminal must this be. Two to three hundred people show up at a private garden to arrest this man. How horrible must be His crimes. Those are the circumstances of Jesus' arrest.

Secondly, I want you to see the illegality or the illegal nature of Jesus' arraignment. You see, after Jesus' arrest, He's brought first to Annas. In Jewish law after a legal arrest, the first step in the legal process was a preliminary hearing, and in that hearing the accused was to be officially arraigned. In our own legal system, the one who's accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The same thing was true in first century Jewish law. So an arrest had to be followed immediately by an arraignment. This was the legal process by which a formal, criminal charge



was brought against the person before a judge. At this arraignment, Jewish law protected the accused from any self-incrimination. It simply did not allow the accused to speak at all. The only way a charge could be made at the arraignment was by witnesses of the crime, and the law specifically said that those witnesses could not be the judges who were trying the case. If in the arraignment the witness's testimony was sufficient then a formal accusation of a crime was made against that person. In our terms, he was indicted. This happened at the arraignment. Witnesses gave their case; the judge impartially heard the witnesses and decided if the evidence met the standard. If it did, then the accused was indicted of the crime and moved toward a trial.

With that basic understanding of Jewish law, let's look at how Jesus' arraignment went. Verse 19, "The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching." That's it. That is the arraignment of Jesus Christ. And it's illegal in almost every conceivable way. Jesus' arrest was the product of a bribe, blood money offered to Judas. Jesus is then arraigned without any accusation of wrong doing. There's no charge here made against Jesus. There are no witnesses. No one's there to say, He said this. He did this. Instead, Jesus is illegally questioned by one of the judges. Annas here is on a fishing expedition. He's looking for any information that he can use to get Jesus pronounced guilty of a capital crime. And Annas intentionally tries to do the very thing that Jewish law forbade, and that was to get Jesus to incriminate Himself.

Annas' questioning here is very telling. Notice he first asks Jesus about His disciples. He's not talking here about the 12, the Sanhedrin knew who they were, they had seen them often with Jesus. Instead, he's really asking Jesus about how many followers He has, how successful He's been. He's not interested in the truth or justice, but in the size of Jesus' organization and operation. This is going to go ultimately to the charge of sedition they want to lay at Jesus' feet. His second question has to do with Jesus' teaching. Everything here is wrong. Everything about this arraignment breaks Jewish law. It was illegal in every sense.

Now that brings us to the third section in this narrative, Jesus' demand for justice. You see this in verses 20 to 24. Notice Jesus' response. He completely ignores Annas' first question, and He goes to the second on His teaching. Verse 20, "Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world." Openly here means candidly, forthrightly, without reserve, I've been outspoken about

what I believe. Verse 20 goes on to say, "I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together." In other words, I have consistently carried out My teaching ministry in public, so if there's some problem with My teaching, there should be what? Plenty of witnesses. "And I spoke nothing in secret." Jesus is not saying that He never taught His disciples in private. Obviously He did that. What He's saying is that He wasn't engaged in some kind of conspiracy or cabal in which He taught something privately that was completely different than what He'd taught publicly. Nothing Jesus said in private contradicted His public teaching. In fact, as you know, most of the time His teaching in private was trying to explain to the 12 the meaning of what He'd taught publicly. So Jesus is saying, listen, what I teach, what I have taught, is out there in the public domain. There are plenty witnesses of it, and what I've said privately doesn't contradict that. So if you want, you can know what it was I said.

Verse 21, "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." Now, that sounds to us somewhat disrespectful and perhaps even evasive, but that's not true at all. In the Greek text the emphasis in that first question is on the word "Me." Jesus is saying, why are you questioning Me? Question those instead who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said. You know what Jesus is doing here? Jesus is insisting that Jewish law be followed, that justice truly be done.

Can I just step on a little soap box here for a moment? Jesus is implying His own support here for a couple of the principles behind our own Fifth Amendment. The guarantees of our Fifth Amendment here in the States really stem from English common law, which in turn can be traced back to the Magna Carta in 1215. Part of our Fifth Amendment protects against self-incrimination. Here's how it reads: "Nor shall any person be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." Now why is that important? Why was it important for that amendment to be passed? Because where that foundation of law is not in place, those in authority will use physical force until they get the accused to testify against himself. They incarcerate the prisoner, they torture the person, they threaten other family members, all to bring about personally incriminating testimony, which all too often then is simply not true. Jesus is refusing to testify against Himself.

He's also demanding another part of the Fifth Amendment, what it provides, and that is due process of law. You see, Jewish law called for a certain legal process to be followed. At His arraignment He should not be asked to testify against Himself; in fact, He should not be questioned at all. There should be witnesses; they should be bringing the charges. And Annas should be simply be deciding if their testimony called for a formal indictment. In essence, Jesus here is demanding that His arraignment and His trial be carried out with due process of law, that it be just.

This shouldn't surprise us, should it? Because the One who stands before Annas is the Judge of all the universe. Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus Himself had said in John 5:22, "Not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son." Jesus is and will be the Judge of all humanity. He knows what processes ought to be followed. He knows what's just, and He's insisting on it at His own trial. Paul, in Acts 17, verse 31, says, "God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising that man from the dead." And thankfully, humanity will not receive from Him the kind of injustice He received.

John the Apostle, in his Gospel loves irony, and this story is filled with irony, huge ironies. Here you have heaven's High Priest, the only One who's really qualified to be high priest, standing before a human high priest, who is utterly disqualified and has bought his way into the office. Here you have the One who will be the Judge of all, standing before a series of human judges, the One who is always impartially just, standing before a travesty of justice. You remember what Jesus told Pilate just a few hours later? In John 19:11 Jesus said, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you." Jesus is the only rightfully Judge in the universe, and He has delegated that authority to human judges. And now He stands before one to whom He Himself has delegated that authority, and He's insisting that it be handled justly. Ironically, in the kangaroo court of Annas that morning, it wasn't Jesus who was on trial; it was Annas, his political expediency, and his gross miscarriage of justice. Jesus' words were respectful, but don't miss it, they were stinging. They were intentionally a reminder that he was breaching every rule of due process of law and justice. I'm sure they were followed by an awkward moment of silence.

But one of Annas' underlings comes to his rescue. Verse 22: "When Jesus had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" Now at this point, this member of the temple guard, looking perhaps to be noticed, looking perhaps to advance his career, sees an opportunity. And he rises in defense of the high priest, and he struck Jesus. The Greek word in context probably means to strike with an open hand, to slap. The same word is used later of the soldiers doing exactly that. So, rather than deal with what Jesus said, he attacks the person.

This week I was reading a little of S. Lewis Johnson. And he tells the story of a seasoned lawyer, who was trying to teach a young lawyer how things really worked in the courtroom. And he said listen, if the law is on your side, emphasize the law; if the facts are on your side, then emphasize the evidence; if neither the law nor the facts are on your side, attack the other lawyer.

That's in essence what's happening here, attack the person. What an amazing thing. This underling, this member of the temple police strikes Jesus, apparently still bound as He was arrested, strikes Him across the face because of His response. Referring to this blow at Jesus, Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish scholar, writes this, "Humanity itself seems to reel and stagger under this blow. For he struck a blow for human nature, and human nature has been taking that position against Jesus Christ down through the years."

But notice what he says, because he turns attention away from what Jesus said to how He said it "Is that the way you speak to the high priest?" Historians tell us that this would have been very unusual, how Jesus was responding to this powerful, powerful man. In fact, they tell us that when people appeared before the Sanhedrin, they literally fell over themselves to appear submissive and respectful. And they would never have spoken like this for fear of the repercussions. Because the high priest, or a former high priest, in this case the most powerful man in the land, could have you excommunicated from the synagogue. That means that no Jewish person could do business with you. That means your own family would cut you off. In some way, the Sanhedrin was more powerful than the Romans. All they could do was kill you. But the Sanhedrin could make your entire life an island in the middle of your people.

Notice Jesus' response to this soldier. He doesn't comment on how He spoke, but again, He comes back to what He spoke. Verse 23, "Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" It was against the law also by the way, to use physical violence against someone who had been accused but not convicted. So again, Jesus is reminding them of the law. He's reminding them of what is just. He's not been found guilty of anything. There's no testimony been brought against Him and therefore He does not deserve to be struck.

At this point, Caiaphas realizes he's been bested. He's not going to get any helpful information out of Jesus, nothing that's self-incriminating. And so this illegal arraignment is over. Verse 24, "So Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest." Annas' questioning had at least allowed Caiaphas time to assemble a quorum of the Sanhedrin. It's now about 2 am. It's likely that Annas and Caiaphas shared a courtyard, a common courtyard. The historians tell us their homes may have been built around a central courtyard. And so all of this is going on, Peter's out in the courtyard, this initial questioning with Annas, and then Annas simply sends Him across the courtyard to the home of Caiaphas. The legal arraignment of Jesus Christ is over. His case has been transferred to the Sanhedrin for trial as if there had been plenty of evidence to indict Him. But it was a joke. It was a miscarriage of justice. It was a kangaroo court.

Now the question is why? Why does John the Apostle record this account? What's the point? I think there are two points that stand out. The first is to help us see ourselves in Annas. Looking at Annas is like every unbeliever looking at himself in the mirror. Why did Annas reject Jesus? The same reasons most people today reject Jesus. What was Annas' problem with Jesus? Well, Annas had three huge problems with Jesus. First of all, Jesus was the potential loss of his position and power. Go back to John 11. In that secret meeting of the Sanhedrin some six weeks before in which they decided to kill Jesus, here was the issue. Verse 47, "What are we doing? This man's performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this," here's the problem "all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place" our position "and our nation." This was the issue. Annas saw in Jesus the threat to his loss of position and power. There was also the threat to his personal wealth and his business and therefore his personal

pleasure. You remember what happened on Monday of the Passion Week? Jesus went into the temple, and what did He do? For the second time in His ministry, He cleansed the temple. Cleansed it of whom? Of moneychangers and of those selling animals. What was Annas' business? Where did his wealth come from? That's where his money came from. Jesus attacked the very heart of Annas that day. Jesus said, you, (meaning ultimately Annas) have turned the house of God into a den of robbers, and He drove them out.

There was another reason Annas hated Jesus, because Jesus was a threat to his religion. Most of the priestly aristocracy were Sadducees. Sadducees were anti-super naturalists; that is, they did not believe that God intervenes in world He's made. They didn't believe in angels. They didn't believe that there was a spirit world at all. And they had one other major doctrinal platform. The Sadducees, including Annas, did not believe in a bodily resurrection. What had Jesus done six weeks before, publicly, with great fanfare? In a city three miles from Jerusalem, He had gone, allowed His friend Lazarus to remain in the grave four days; and He shows up late intentionally, when his body was already beginning to decay, and fantastically raises Lazarus from the dead. And then He says, and I'm going to do exactly the same for every follower of Mine. It was a slap in the face of Annas and every Sadducee.

So do you see what's going on here? Annas has a problem. Faced with Jesus, Annas has to make a choice. He has to either really choose to evaluate the evidence about Jesus and come to believe in Him, or, he has to protect what's his. He has to protect his position and his status. He has to protect his prosperity, which in turn leads to his pleasure. He has to protect his religion. And you know what he chose.

Here's the irony. Right now, during our lives on earth, every single one of us sits in the seat of Annas. We're able to sit in judgment of Jesus Christ. You can sit right now in judgment of Jesus Christ. Is He who He claimed? Ah, I'm not sure. Is following Him worth giving up everything in my life? Is it worth my position? Is it worth my status? Is it worth my reputation? Is it worth my prosperity and my pleasure? Is it worth my religion? Right now, you can sit in judgment of Jesus Christ just like Annas did. Imagine what it will be like someday when Annas stands before Jesus Christ as Judge. Imagine how sobering that moment will be. And imagine how sobering it

will be for everyone who sits in judgment of Jesus today and decides you know what it's not worth giving up the things I want. Every unbeliever really sits in the seat of Annas, this tragic figure. I beg you, don't be Annas. Evaluate the evidence. See who Jesus really is, that He is worth giving your life to, following and pursuing with everything in you. Don't hang on to the stuff, or you will someday find yourself in eternity in Annas' position as well.

Another reason this passage is here, the second reason is really the main reason, it's to prove Jesus' innocence. Jesus is accused through all these six trials, three civil trials, three ecclesiastical trials; He's only accused of two charges, both of which are capital offenses. The first one in the Jewish trial is blasphemy; the second one in the Roman trials is insurrection. No less than four times Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent of the charges of insurrection. I read one of them to you this morning. And the charge of blasphemy, it is only true if His claims are proven to be false. But no evidence is ever brought in Jesus' defense. There are no eyewitnesses for the defense. His disciples aren't marched up there and allowed to explain all that they had seen and witnessed. That's because the outcome of this trial had been decided six weeks before.

Put it all together? This is nothing but a kangaroo court, a miscarriage of justice. And the death of Jesus Christ turns out not to be the justified act of capital punishment carried out through a careful, judicial process, but it is a mob lynching. Jesus was not executed, understand this, He was murdered. That's why Isaiah says He was like a lamb led to the slaughter. This paragraph serves one primary purpose: to prove that the arrest of Jesus Christ was in fact illegal, that there was absolutely no evidence that He'd committed any crime, much less a capital crime. And as in our own legal system, that means every decision that flowed from this illegal arrest and arraignment were in fact illegal. And that fact, folks, has huge ramifications for our faith. You understand this? By showing us that Jesus was innocent, not only before God, but also before every human court, John is establishing an essential part of the Christian faith, and that is that Jesus had the credentials to die in the place of sinners. He didn't deserve to die. He was dying for someone else.

Turn back to Isaiah 53, which is really the commentary on this. Isaiah 53 look at verse 7. Here is Isaiah's commentary 700 years before these events unfolded, "He was oppressed and He was

afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.” Meaning He didn't take all that was His. “By oppression and judgment” by a miscarriage of justice “He was taken away;” Verse 9, “His grave was assigned with the wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.” That points toward total, moral purity. He was absolutely undeserving of death. Did you notice the terms in there: oppressed, led to slaughter, oppression and judgment, no violence, no deceit. So then why? Why did He have to die? Look back at verse 8, “And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living” here it is “for the transgression of my people,” for the rebellion of my people, underline this “to whom the stroke was due?” To whom the stroke was due. He goes on in verse 10 to say it was the Father and Jesus Himself who were in control of this process to accomplish a spiritual end. Notice verse 10: “The Lord Yahweh was pleased to crush Him.” And verse 10 goes on to say Jesus' perspective, Jesus rendered “Himself as a guilt offering.” There's the reason for His death.

This week as you read about and you meditate on our Lord's last week, think about this. This is the point; the injustice Jesus received was the justice you deserved. The injustice Jesus received was the justice you deserved and I deserved. Look at verse 8 again, “And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?” Let's pray together.

Father, we're overwhelmed by Your grace as we read this account, as we study it together. Lord, we realize that we were really there in two ways. We were in the seat of Annas passing judgment on Christ until You saved us, until You brought us to Yourself. But Father, we were also there because Jesus was getting the pronouncement of punishment we deserved. It was unjust for Him, because He didn't deserve it. But it was the justice we deserved. He bore the stroke that was due us, not only in His trials and His human suffering, but Father, on the cross, as You poured out for those six hours on that Friday all the wrath of all the sins of all of those who believe. Father, we thank You and bless You that He stood in our place, the just in the place of the unjust, in order that He might bring us to You. We bless You, O God. We thank You.



Lord, I pray for anyone here this morning who doesn't know You. Lord, may they see themselves right now in the seat of Annas, passing judgment on Jesus Christ. But Father, may You take them in their mind's eye into the future, when someday they stand before Jesus Christ and the roles are reversed. May this be the day, O God, when they bow the knee to Him, and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior and King. Father, I pray for those of us who know Him. As we contemplate His death and His resurrection this week, take us back to these events. Remind us, O God, that the injustice He received was the justice we deserved. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.