

John 18:12-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/john/john-18/john-1812-14/>

John tells us that following His submission to arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was brought to the house of Annas first. He informs us that Annas was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the sitting high priest, and reminds his readers that Caiaphas was the one who previously determined it was better that Jesus die than that they risk losing their place or nation. This was John's way of telling the reader that the trial's outcome was determined before it began.

There is no apparent parallel Gospel account for this event.

- Note: Throughout this portion of commentary, each time a Jewish law was broken by the chief priests and elders as they prosecuted *Jesus*, we identify that rule by means of brackets—i.e. [Rule 2: Neutrality]. The numbering of these rules is according to The Bible Says series about the Religious Prosecution of *Jesus*.

For a complete listing of the broken rules, see The Bible Says Article:

[“Jesus's Trial, Part 1. The Laws Broken by the Religious Leaders: A Summary.”](#)

As soon as *the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews arrested and bound Jesus* in the Garden of Gethsemane, they *led Him* to the home of *Annas*, the former *high priest* (v 12-13a) for His preliminary trial [Rule 6: Illegal Location].

The religious authorities conducted three hasty trials for Jesus in a span of only a few hours from the moment they arrested Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:47-56; John 18:1-11) until they brought Him to Pilate shortly after dawn for a civil trial (Matthew 27:2; John 18:28). These three hasty trials were religious in nature. All three trials violated multiple laws from both the Torah (the written law of Moses) and the Mishnah (the oral traditions and laws).

The three Religious Trials of *Jesus* were:

1. *Jesus's Preliminary Trial in the House of Annas*
2. *Jesus's Nighttime Trial in the House of Caiaphas*
3. *The Sanhedrin's Sunrise Condemnation of Jesus*

It is John who informs us that they took *Jesus to Annas first* (v 13) and then to *Caiaphas* second (John 18:24). No single Gospel discusses all three trials in detail, but together they complement each other to portray a complete picture as to what happened to *Jesus* in the dark hours following His arrest.

- The narratives of Matthew and Mark do not cover *Jesus's* illegal preliminary trial before *Annas*. They focus on *Jesus's* illegal night-time trial in the house of *Caiaphas* (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53, 55-65) before briefly mentioning *Jesus's* sunrise trial (also illegal)

which officially sentenced *Him* to death on religious grounds (Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1).

- Luke mentions that after they “arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest” (Luke 22:54), but he does not specify if *Jesus* was brought to the house of *Annas* (the former high priest) or the house of *Caiaphas*, who was high priest that year (v 13b). Luke’s Gospel skips both *Jesus*’s preliminary trial (in the house of *Annas*) and His second trial (in the house of *Caiaphas*). But Luke details *Jesus*’s sunrise trial before the Sanhedrin that Matthew and Mark only mention (Luke 22:66-71).
- John alone among the Gospels details *Jesus*’s preliminary trial in the house of *Annas* before mentioning that *Jesus* was then sent to *Caiaphas* the high priest (John 18:12-14, 19-24). John does not detail *Jesus*’s second trial before *Caiaphas*, and he does not mention His third religious trial, in front of the Sanhedrin at sunrise.

To better understand the sequence of these events, please see:

- [“Timeline: The Final 24 Hours of the Life of Jesus.”](#)
- [“Jesus’s Trial, Part 3. The 5 Stages of Jesus’s Trial.”](#)

Once again, following his account of *Jesus*’s submitting to arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1-11) John writes: *So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him* (v 12).

The reader may recall from John 18:3 that *the Roman cohort and officers* from the chief priests and the Pharisees all came with Judas to arrest *Jesus*. Now this same force consisting of Romans and *Jews*, having *arrested Jesus*, were bringing *Him* back into the city of Jerusalem, *bound* for his preliminary trial [Rule 2: Neutrality].

A *Roman cohort* consisted of 100 troops or more. John says that *the commander of the cohort* was with them. The Greek term that he uses which is translated as *commander*, is the word: *χλῆιαρχος* (G5506—pronounced: “khil-ee'-ar-khos” and it is transliterated as “chiliarch”). A chiliarch is *the commander* of a thousand troops. This term likely indicates that one of, if not **the**, commanding *Roman* military officer stationed in Jerusalem was sent with his *cohort* to arrest *Jesus*.

John’s description *the officers of the Jews*, is his term to describe the chief priests (Sadducees), the temple police (who worked for the Sadducees), and the Pharisees.

John says that they *led Jesus to Annas first*.

Annas was a leading member of the Sadducees and a former *high priest*. He held this position from 6 A.D.—15 A.D. (*Jesus*’s trial was sometime around 30 A.D.). He was the patriarch of a *high priestly* dynasty. John tells us that *Annas* was the *father-in-law of Caiaphas*, the sitting *high priest that year* (v 13b). Additionally, *Annas* was the father or grandfather to no less than five

high priests. Originally from Egypt, *Annas* came to Jerusalem at the invitation of Herod the Great. With the ruthless king as his ally, *Annas* quickly rose to power through cunning and ambition. He was notorious, and unpopular, but feared.

After *Annas* was replaced as the *high priest*, he expanded his influence through his sons' and Caiaphas's tenures. For instance, Luke records that John the Baptist began his ministry during "the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas" (Luke 3:1-2). Luke seems to be suggesting that *Annas* was the real power behind *Caiaphas*, his proxy. This suggestion is bolstered by the fact that *Jesus* was *first* brought to *Annas*'s house upon His arrest.

Annas also remained a powerful figure through his financially lucrative Temple connections.

The Jewish Talmud records a poem or song denouncing the House of Annas for being infamous slanderers, corrupt and greedy priests (Talmud. Pesachim 57a:8). This last charge infers that *Annas* was one of the main profiteers of the Temple booths that extorted worshippers through the money changers and through selling sacrificial animals (presumably at high prices) (Matthew 21:12; John 2:13-22).

To learn more about Annas and/or Caiaphas, please see the Bible Says' article: ["Jesus's Trial, Part 2. The Jewish Law and the Political Actors who Condemned Jesus."](#)

From this we can infer then that when *Jesus* cleared the Temple, it was largely *Annas* who was responsible for turning God's Temple into a robber's den, and therefore whom *Jesus* was chastising (Matthew 21:13). If this was the case, *Annas*'s coffers likely suffered the biggest loss when *Jesus* did this. *Annas*'s disdain for *Jesus* might then have been both personal and financial. The elderly *Annas* might have taken great satisfaction when *Jesus* was *arrested* and *first* brought to his house for a preliminary trial in the middle of the night [Rule 2: Neutrality; Rule 5: Illegal Timing; Rule 6 Illegal Location].

One of the main reasons they *led Jesus to Annas* (the former *high priest*) *first*, instead of to *Caiaphas*, who was *high priest that year*, was likely because the Jews were neither ready nor expecting to try *Jesus* at this moment.

Matthew tells us that they were plotting to wait until after the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread festival was over in order to avoid a riot (Matthew 26:2) [Rule 1 Conspiracy]. When *Jesus*'s disciple Judas agreed to betray *Him* to them, they began looking for a good opportunity to arrest Him (Matthew 26:16) [Rule 4: Bribery]. The night of Passover was almost certainly not that time.

But *Jesus* apparently forced their hand, as it were, when He identified Judas as His betrayer during their Passover Seder (John 13:26-27). Judas then "went out immediately" and informed the chief priests (John 13:30). This likely alarmed them greatly, because not only was the plot spoiled, but now they risked being exposed to the people for trying to murder the Man many hoped and believed was the Messiah. If the truth of this spread, they would be ruined.

Therefore, they acted quickly and quietly. The *high priest, Caiaphas* requested a *Roman cohort* from the governor Pilate to arrest *Jesus*. His request was granted. During or after *Jesus's* arrest, the priests and elders gathered in the home of *Caiaphas* to come up with a charge to accuse *Jesus* with and to produce witnesses so they could convict and execute *Him* [Rule 7: Lack of a Charge; Rule 9: Lack of Evidence].

By bringing *Jesus to Annas first*, it gave *Caiaphas* and the Sanhedrin time to gather and prepare for a midnight trial none of them were previously expecting to conduct. Bringing *Jesus to Annas first* also gave the former *high priest*, a notorious slanderer and seasoned accuser (Talmud. Pesachim 57a:8), an opportunity to interrogate *Jesus* [Rule 12: Improper Prosecution] and possibly manufacture or find the deadly charge they desperately desired.

Before going on to describe Peter's first denial (John 18:15-18), John adds an interesting reminder:

Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people (v 14).

John said this in reference to what he shared earlier when the Sanhedrin council first conspired to kill *Jesus* (John 11:47-53) [Rule 1 Conspiracy]. The Sanhedrin was worried that if they let *Jesus* “go on like this, all men will believe, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:48). It was *Caiaphas* who advised them *that it was expedient* (for them) *for Jesus to die* rather than for Israel to lose its semi-sovereign status as a province of Rome (John 11:49-50). *Caiaphas* then prophesied that *Jesus* was going *to die* for the nation (John 11:51).

John's reference to *Caiaphas* as the son-in-law to *Annas*, and his reminder of *Caiaphas's* murderous advice are his way of telling us that not only was there an illegal conspiracy to kill *Jesus*—a conspiracy that went all the way to the two most powerful men in the Sanhedrin: *Annas* the former *high priest*, and *Caiaphas*, the sitting *high priest* [Rule 1: Conspiracy]—but also that the trial was fixed [Rule 3: Rigged Trial]. In other words, the verdict was predetermined and the sentence of death was already decided before they even had a crime of which to charge *Jesus* [Rule 7: Lack of a Charge].

John will describe *Jesus's* preliminary religious trial in John 18:19-24, but first he tells us about Peter (John 18:15-18), who followed *the cohort and officers to Annas's* house after *Jesus* submitted to arrest and told him to put down his sword (John 18:10-11).

For a detailed explanation of the principles that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says Article:

[“Jesus's Trial, Part 4. The Judicial Principles that were Violated.”](#)

For a detailed explanation of the other laws that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says Article:

[“Jesus's Trial, Part 5. The Laws of Practice that were Violated.”](#)

Biblical Text

¹² So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, ¹³ and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 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.