



Caiaphas - High Priest, Low Understanding

*49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. (John 11:49-52)*

Is it possible for goodness to emerge from evil deeds and thoughts? By all means it is certainly within the power of our God to bring goodness out of evil. Of course, evil left to itself begets worse evil. But for the Elect and Chosen of God, even evil and wicked snares of the enemy are turned to his goodness. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) Do not stumble at the word 'ALL' for it means precisely what it says. ALL things work together for good to them that love God....* But even seemingly good things work together toward the condemnation of the wicked - even their good deeds. *1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. 3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. 4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin. (Prov 21:1-4)* It is difficult for the human mind to conceive simple plowing as sin, but for the wicked, no matter what good deed they perform, it is wickedness. There are not good works apart from those of the servant of God acting upon the will and commission of God.

Caiaphas was the learned High Priest of Israel. He was respected and revered everywhere he went. He looked the part with his robes of fine linen bordered with signs of his piety and office. If miters were to be had at any price in that day, you can wager the farm that Caiaphas would have made the purchase. But like many religious icons of our own day, Caiaphas was thoroughly wicked. It is obvious that he committed no outward sins owing to his high office; but his heart was full of the bones and blood of sinful compromise and political calculation.

Caiaphas at first only heard rumors of a man called Jesus of Nazareth. He learned that Jesus had been baptized by John in Jordan Waters. Caiaphas heard that many multitudes had begun to throng to Christ to hear His preaching and to see His miraculous works - more than ever came to hear and see Caiaphas. Jesus seemed to have an uncanny source of authority that Caiaphas could hardly fathom. No question

about it: Jesus worked miracles and had all of the prophetic marks and attributes of the Messiah; and this is precisely what troubled Caiaphas about Jesus. If Jesus were broadly recognized as the Messiah, what place would there be for a High Priest? If Jesus was the Messiah, what would happen to Caiaphas and his ecclesiastical authority - or of what need of animal sacrifices? Caiaphas would become as Saul, and Jesus would become as David!

His political mind began to exercise itself to seek a remedy to this impending dilemma. Water into wine; chasing the money-changers from the Temple (particularly heinous for the standard of living of Caiaphas); rebuilding the Temple in three days, indeed; healing the lame at the Pool of Bethesda; feeding thousands from scratch; Jesus even taught in the Temple right under the nose of those who presumed the authority all to themselves; forgiving sins willy-nilly even of those taken in the act of adultery; restoring sight to the blind; and even shaking the faith of Nicodemus - a fellow of the Sanhedrin. To Caiaphas, this was not a theological issue, but a political one. Jesus seemed, unlike Caiaphas, to take every Word of the Laws and the Prophets seriously, and He knew them better than Caiaphas' own learned council. It became more and more obvious in the worldly and twisted mind of Caiaphas that this man, Jesus, must be destroyed.

We look at Caiaphas and find him repugnant in every way; yet, how many churches and ministers today only give a contrived lip-service to Christ. They turn His Gospel on its head in their political ambitions for power and growth. The doors of the mainline church buildings are, today, closed to Christ - and His Church as well is locked out and relegated to exiled status. The respected and learned men who head these churches are not, in any sense, different from Caiaphas. They would have Christ crucified anew, if it were in their power, should He attempt to enter their church buildings and restore the Truth of the Gospel. Do not doubt it!

Just as God used the decree of the wicked Caesar Augustus to bring Mary to Bethlehem for the prophesied birth of His only Begotten Son, so He uses Caiaphas to express a great truth of which Caiaphas had no understanding at all - not out of innocence, but out of a stiff-necked rebellion to God. Many do not believe today because they choose not to believe. God knows them, and He knows the hidden evils of their heart. .... *the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.* (1 Sam 16:7)

Now Jesus has gone a 'bridge-too-far' for Caiaphas and the Pharisees to overlook - He has raised a man - Lazarus - from the dead in the sight of many witnesses. Many believed on Jesus because of these miraculous works. *45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.* (John 11:45-48) It was as much the loss of their status as the loss of the nation which Caiaphas and his cohorts feared.

*Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* Though uttered by a desperate sinner, these words were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Jesus would die for the people and the Kingdom of God. But Caiaphas limits the benefit of his death to 'us' and the nation. Caiaphas held a position of authority in Israel as High Priest, thus he was compelled to pronounce the purpose of God without understanding it. His motive was selfishness, but the Truth revealed an immeasurable mercy on God's part to provide us with a Redeemer.

Being called of God to a position of authority in His Kingdom and Church is a

serious matter, indeed. The greater the responsibility, the greater the peril for disobedience. ***For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:*** (Luke 12:48) As stewards of God's Vineyard, a minister must be an example of faithfulness and righteous endeavor. *1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.* (1 Cor 4:1-2)

We no longer have a High Priest in Israel today for Jesus Christ has become our High Priest. No longer do we need a high priest as our intermediary before the Holiest of Holies for Christ has become our High Priest, our Friend, our Redeemer, our Lord, our Savior, and Sacrifice. *14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb 4:14-16)

We are in the midst of the Season of Lent. In most churches across America (and I am sorry to say MOST), a minister after the likes of Caiaphas will mount the pulpits and teach us a message that is weak and maybe even defamatory of the Gospel. At the same time, devout and Godly men and women will gather in the bush country of Kenya under the arbor of a Kon Tree, and throughout the islands of the sea, I know, for I have witnessed it, and conduct soul searching services to the glory of God. And there will be a few, even in western churches, who are considered the religious outcasts, who will do the same. My prayer is that all who read this devotion will be among the latter.