

### Exegesis

**Vs. 19-21** – The focus of John's narrative shifts from Peter back to Jesus. He explains that Annas was concerned about Jesus' "disciples" and "doctrine." We're not told why the high priest emeritus was interested in the apostles. Since John was known to Annas, but Peter was not, perhaps the identities of the rest of the disciples were also a mystery. Knowing who they were would make it easier to track them down, cutting off any efforts to retaliate. One of Jesus' followers had attempted to kill one of his servants, after all (vs. 10). Regardless of their interest in the disciples, Jesus ended up ignoring the topic altogether, likely because he had every intention of protecting them until the very end (cf. vs. 9; 17:12).

But Annas also questioned Jesus about his "doctrine." Despite what they said to Pilate (cf. 19:7, 12), their beef with Jesus was not political but *theological*—i.e., he claimed to be the "Son of God" (10:36).<sup>1</sup> The other time Jesus' "doctrine" is mentioned is during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:16-17), where we learned that, even back then, the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus (7:19). But such questions, particularly about his doctrine, doesn't really make sense. Since, as Jesus himself points out, he spoke "*openly* [emphasis added] to the world" and how he only "ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort." In other words, many could testify about Jesus' teachings as "nothing" he taught was a "secret" (cf. Isa. 45:19; 48:16). This is not to say he never said or did anything in secret (cf. 7:10; Mat. 17:19; Mar. 9:28), but that what he said in the open was the *same* as what he said behind closed doors. He was no clandestine conspirator.<sup>2</sup> The Lord was the same person in *public* as he was in *private*. Whatever teaching he gave to his inner circle almost always explained something he had already said to the crowds (cf. Matt. 13:10-12).

Considering this, the Lord wonders aloud why Annas was asking him anything at all. Wasn't a person's testimony about himself worthless (cf. 5:31)? If the high priest really wanted to know about Jesus' doctrine, he should interrogate the people. He should get as many *impartial* and *unbiased* testimonies as he can if he truly wants to uphold the integrity of the law.

By Jesus' own admission, everyone had "heard [him]" teach. The crowd hung on every word he said (cf. Lu. 19:48). As such, there were more than a few people who could tell Annas exactly "what [he] said unto them." This is why Jesus says, "Behold, they know what I said." He was not about to rehash everything he taught, especially when he knew that whatever he said could

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<sup>1</sup> Carson (1991), p. 583.

<sup>2</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 517.

and would be used against him in a court of law. Of course, ironically, the people's obsession with his teaching was why they were even having this discussion. So, the *last thing* Annas wanted would be to get the people involved (cf. 12:19).

**Vs. 22-23** – Regardless of how valid his reasoning was, from the perspective of his captors, Jesus had refused to answer a direct question. Such blatant defiance would not go unanswered. This is why “one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?” *Blind* devotion mattered more at this moment than *sound* argumentation. Thus, the first to harm Jesus was not a Roman officer but a Jewish one. Later, when he stood before Caiaphas (Mat. 26:68), the abuse continued when the servants of the high priest spit, struck, slapped, and mocked him, saying, “Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”

Israel, who had grown into a nation under the loving hand of God, abused the face of God incarnate and would soon do much worse. If striking a parent was punishable by death under the Mosaic Law (cf. Ex. 21:15), how much more here? Yet, we do not see Jesus striking down his opponent. Instead, he turns the other cheek (cf. Matt. 5:38-40) and continues to reason with them, saying, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”<sup>3</sup> Just as Annas' interrogation was bogus, so was this abuse. Had the Lord given false testimony? No. Had he dishonored Annas in any way? No. So, if they could not establish his guilt in either of these matters, then there's no justifiable reason for the violence. Rather than innocent until proven guilty, the Lord was already a condemned man; he was given no opportunity to prove his innocence. This whole informal investigation was more akin to bad theater, like *Jerry Springer* or *Judge Judy*, than due process of the law. Jesus wanted a fair trial; instead, he got a kangaroo court.

**Vs. 24** – Realizing his prisoner would not incriminate himself, “Annas” sent Jesus “bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.” He would have had to do so anyway since an *official* allegation could only be levied against the Lord by a high priest who was *officially* recognized by the Roman government.<sup>4</sup> As powerful as Annas thought of himself, he could do nothing without Rome's consent.

**Vs. 25-26** – At this point, John tells us, “Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.” This undoubtedly refers to the *same* charcoal fire mentioned in vs. 18, which, contextually, implies

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<sup>3</sup> Carson (1991), p. 585, “But Jesus did not call anyone names; he had nothing for which to apologize. Nor was he refusing to ‘turn the other cheek’: that ought to be clear from the cross itself. But turning the other cheek without bearing witness to the truth is not the fruit of moral resolution but the terrorized cowardice of the wimp.”

<sup>4</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 518.

Annas and Caiaphas lived on the *same* property (cf. Lu. 22:54). But John is also pointing out that the Lead Apostle *hasn't moved*; he's close enough to see Jesus (cf. Lu. 22:61) but far enough away to disassociate himself from the Lord.

Yet, if Peter wanted to remain obscure, he hadn't distanced himself *enough*. As we'll see, staying will expose him to even *more* attention and questions. John tells us, "They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not." This question is nearly identical to the one before, including the word "also," which implies a comparison between Peter and the "another disciple" (vs. 15), aka John. Thus, as before, the assertive disciple cowers before the accusation of a servant girl (cf. Matt. 26:71), going so far as to use an oath to sell the lie this time (Matt. 26:72; cf. Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12). And once again, Peter denied Jesus within earshot of John.<sup>5</sup>

About an hour later (cf. Lu. 22:59), Peter is again asked about his possible association with Jesus. And as before (vs. 16), "one of the servants of the high priest" did the questioning. Except, this time, the servant thought he *recognized* the apostle. This was for two reasons: first, he was "kinsman" to Malchus, the same man who had his ear chomped off by Peter in vs. 10; and second, considering his question, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him," we can assume the last of Peter's inquisitors was also one of the men who had arrested Jesus in Gethsemane. In totality, the man expected a *positive* answer. So, if Peter shrank before two inconsequential serving girls who had little knowledge of him, it should be no surprise that "Peter then denied again." Not only because he's made it a habit at this point but also because, this time, he was standing before someone who was not only *family* to the guy he had physically assaulted, but his examiner was also a *member* of the very band that took Jesus in. Had Peter said, "yes," he would've incriminated himself.

But no sooner had Peter spoken his third denial that "immediately the cock crew." Interestingly, Luke tells us that Jesus and Peter actually locked eyes at this very moment (Lu. 22:61). And so, under the piercing gaze of his master and the caw of a rooster, Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him in the Upper Room (cf. 13:38). The man had done the very thing he said he would not do. But while he had fooled himself, Jesus had seen straight through him. And this revelation so broke the disciple's heart that he finally fled the scene, weeping bitterly as he sought solitude in the dark of night (cf. Mat. 26:75).

Thankfully, we know that Peter will have an opportunity to recant each of these denials. But we'll have to wait till John's epilogue, at the very end of the book (cf. 21:15-19), for that sweet

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<sup>5</sup> Carson (1991), p. 586.

resolution. For now, we are left to ponder Peter's (and our own) fragility and Jesus' omniscience. You see, it is no small comfort to know that God holds all our tomorrows. Though we may be surprised by tragedy and difficulty, *nothing* can surprise him. But lest we forget, as thoroughly as the Lord knows the end from the beginning, he also “knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa. 103:14). Before we ever make a vow, the all-knowing God knows if we'll keep it. This is why our confidence should never be in ourselves, in our own ingenuity or might, but in the Almighty alone (cf. Ps. 20:7). However high we may climb, it is to the Lord's credit that we reached such heights, just as, however low we may fall, it is to the Lord's credit that we are not lost forever. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carson (1991), p. 586, “Both for John’s readers, and for the early church generally, this is not Peter’s final scene. As serious as was his disowning of the Master, so greatly also must we esteem the grace that forgave him and restored him to fellowship and service. And that means—both in John’s Gospel and in our lives—that there is hope for the rest of us.”

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

### **Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 81 | John 18:19-27**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, Jesus will stand before the high priest emeritus, Annas. Given Annas' position, one would think that the Lord would be treated fairly—that he would be treated as innocent until proven guilty. But that could not be further from the truth. This whole informal investigation was more akin to bad theater, like *Jerry Springer* or *Judge Judy*, than due process of the law. Jesus *wanted* a fair trial; instead, he got a kangaroo court.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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