

Caiaphas

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 17th April 2011

Intro-

- In Dec 1990 a road was being laid in the Abu Tor district of Jerusalem by a grove of pine trees known as the Peace Forest. During the construction a first century tomb was unearthed containing 2 ossuaries (bone boxes). One of the ossuaries was inscribed with the name 'Caiaphas' and the other 'Joseph son of Caiaphas' (Kayafa in Hebrew). The name Caiaphas is rare for the first century and is totally unknown amongst archaeological finds. One of the boxes had the bones of a 60 year old man. Although some have debated it, many believe these to be the bones of Caiaphas, the High Priest named in the Bible as being responsible for arranging the death of Jesus. In fact Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian gives Caiaphas' full name as 'Joseph Caiaphas'.
- As we approach Easter we will look this morning at the moment in Caiaphas' life when he made the fateful decision and see what it means to us today. We will focus on verse 49 from the following passage

Read John 11:45-57

Caiaphas' life shows:

HYPOCRISY- The futility of religion without relationship- v49 'being High Priest that year...'

- Priest in charge of the Temple (or tabernacle) worship.
- Descent from Aaron (Exodus 29:29-30; Leviticus 16:32).
- Normally served for life (Numbers 18:7; Numbers 25:11-13; Numbers 35:25, Numbers 35:28; Nehemiah 12:10-11).

Had to be especially holy (Leviticus 10:6; Leviticus 10:9; Leviticus 21:10-15)

- Avoid defilement by contact with the dead, even in the case of his own parents and was forbidden to show any outward sign of mourning.
- He could not leave the sanctuary precincts. Such legislation identified the high priest as one totally dedicated to the Lord, always ritually pure and ready to serve the Lord.
- If the high priest sinned, he brought guilt upon the whole people (Leviticus 4:3). The sin offering for the high priest (Leviticus 4:3-12) was identical to that required "if the whole congregation of Israel commits a sin" (Leviticus 4:13-21).

Had special clothes and ceremony to become High Priest

- The consecration of the high priest was an elaborate seven-day ritual involving special baths, putting on special garments, and anointing with oil and with blood (Exodus 29:1-37; Leviticus 6:19-22; Leviticus 8:5-35).
- The special garments of the high priest included:
 - (1) A blue robe with an ornate hem decorated with gold bells and embroidered pomegranates.
 - (2) A linen turban with a gold plate inscribed "Holy to Yahweh" (Exodus 28:4-39; Exodus 39:1-31; Leviticus 8:7-9).
 - (3) An 'ephod' (girdle or apron) of fine linen with colorful embroidered work and shoulder straps bearing stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes.
 - (4) A breastplate with twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. The engraved plate and the stones engraved with the tribal names

highlight the role of the high priest as the holy representative of all Israel before the Lord (Exodus 28:12, Exodus 28:29). In his "breastplate of judgment," the high priest kept the sacred lots, the Urim and Thummim, which were used to inquire of the Lord (Exodus 28:29-30; Numbers 27:21). These may be stones with a 'yes' and 'no' answer to questions. Josephus, however, says that when God was present the stones would shine with light.

"But as to those stones, which we told you before, the high priest bare on his shoulders . . . the one of them shined out when God was present at their sacrifices . . . bright rays darting out thence; and being seen even by those that were most remote; which splendor yet was not before natural to the stone. . . . Yet will I mention what is still more wonderful than this; for God declared beforehand, by those twelve stones which the high priest bare on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them before the army began to march, that all the people were sensible of God's being present for their assistance. Whence it came to pass that those Greeks who had a veneration for our laws, because they could not possibly contradict this, called that breastplate the Oracle" (Ant iii, 8 & 9)

The Talmudic concept seems to have been identical with the view of Josephus, holding that the reply of the Urim and Thummim was conveyed by rays of light. Two scholars of the third century, however, who had lost the vividness of the earlier concept, gave the explanation that those stones of the breastplate which contained the answer of the oracle either stood out from the others or formed themselves into groups (Yoma 73b).

- The high priest shared in general priestly duties.
- Only the high priest, however, was allowed to enter the holy of holies and then only on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-25).
- The most spiritual job going- the High Priest- the top of Jewish privilege.
- ALL OF THIS WAS FUTILE- he had reached the top of religion but had no real relationship with God, or he would never have made the decision he did. We might have been on all the Christian courses, and be regular in church meetings, pray regularly etc. but not have a personal relationship with Christ.
- Without realising it, he actually prophesied about why Christ must die. Prophecy can sometimes impress us, however, as we see here, prophecy or gifts do not say anything about character- we need to remember this. Character is so much more important than gifting- 'by their fruit you will know them'.
- **Applic-** In what areas of your life are you tempted to appear religious, but know you really are not submitted to Christ? Have you come into a relationship with Christ for yourself? Are you growing as a Christian in your relationship with God? High priest was the tops of ministry, how does your ministry tally up with your lifestyle? Paul said 'I want to know Christ'-Phil 3:10. Why not make that your prayer today?
- "For the first two or three years after my conversion, I used to ask for specific things. Now I ask for God. Supposing there is a tree full of fruits -- you will have to go and buy or beg the fruits from the owner of the tree. Every day you would have to go for one or two fruits. But if you can make the tree your own property, then all the fruits will be your own. In the same way, if God is your own, then all things in Heaven and on earth will be your own, because He is your Father and is everything to you; otherwise you will have to go and ask like a beggar for certain things. When they are used up, you will have to ask again. So ask not for gifts but for the Giver of Gifts: not for life but for the Giver of Life -- then life and the things needed for life will be added unto you." Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929)

FEAR- The danger of allowing our fears to dictate to us- v49 '..and not that the whole nation should perish'

- American companies panic about lawsuits being issued against their products, so they go crazy with warning labels. Hence the Michigan "Wacky Warning Label Contest." In its 11th year the \$500 winner was to a man who spotted a label on a small tractor which simply said "Danger: Avoid Death." The \$250 second place prize went to a person who found a label on an iron-on T-shirt transfer that warns: "Do not iron while wearing shirt." A man earned the \$100 third-place prize for a label on a baby stroller featuring a small storage pouch that warns: "Do not put child in bag." Honourable mention went to a lady who found a label on a letter opener that says: "Caution: Safety goggles recommended." Another lady took the second honourable for "The Vanishing Fabric Marker should not be used as a writing instrument for signing checks or any legal documents."
- The leader's fears: v48 -If lots more Jews follow Jesus as the Messiah the Romans 'will come and take away both our place (either the temple, or possibly their role), and nation

(Israel, the Jewish nation).

- It seemed like a logical plan, and I'm sure it was put across in a seemingly noble way- allow 1 person to be killed and save a whole nation, but there was a major flaw in it- they were allowing their fears to dictate to them and in their ingenuity were plotting to kill the Messiah, their true king. How many times have we tried to lend God a hand, when we too have operated out of fear, rather than trusted in God? Perhaps we have been trying to outreach to someone and we have orchestrated certain events to happen, but it has ended up backfiring on us. Perhaps we have been trying to hide from a certain person that we are a Christian, out of fear of what they might think, and have ended up looking even more foolish by foolish cover-up stories.

Not many people enjoy going to the doctor, but in 1994, one London accountant took that to an extreme. The 63 year-old man knew he needed bladder surgery but he could not overcome his fear of doctors and hospitals. So he self-reliantly did what had to be done: He tried to perform the surgery on himself. Tragically he got an infection from the self-surgery and later died. The coroner said, "Unfortunately, [his] drastic remedy went wrong. A simple operation would have solved the problem." Just as this man didn't trust doctors or hospitals, many people don't trust God. In their self-reliance, they destroy themselves.

- The sad thing is that, because the High Priest gave in to his fears and acted out of the 'fear of man' rather than the 'fear of God' he made a terrible decision which meant that within a generation the things Jesus predicted would happen actually came to pass- the Romans destroyed their temple and ransacked the city, scattering the Jews to the 4 corners of the earth (the Diaspora). Later, the very name of Jerusalem became changed to Aelia Capitolina

Josephus, a contemporary, reports that "Jerusalem ... was so thoroughly razed to the ground by those that demolished it to its foundations, that nothing was left that could ever persuade visitors that it had once been a place of habitation.". When Emperor Hadrian vowed to rebuild Jerusalem from the wreckage in 130 A.D., he considered reconstructing Jerusalem as a gift for the Jewish people. The Jews awaited with hope, because Hadrian was considered a moderate. But after Hadrian visited Jerusalem, he decided to build it as Aelia Capitolina (named after the god Jupiter Capitolinus whose temple was built on the former site of God's temple). He built the city to be inhabited by his legionnaires. Hadrian also decided to never allow Jews to re-enter the city ever again.

- 'What the wicked dreads will overtake him; what the righteous desire will be granted'- Prov 10:24
- **Applic-** How do you handle your fears? Are you a pessimist or an optimist? There is such a thing as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we keep saying, like Pike, 'We're doomed!' we're probably able to talk ourselves onto the path of disaster, like the gravestone 'I told you I was ill'.
- We need to surrender our fears to God, and submit to Him. Repentance is key for breaking fear- 'Lord please forgive me for putting this fear before obeying You. I choose to trust You with this situation.'
- A matter of where our focus is. God is bigger than the problem.
- Fear of the unknown- testimonials- remembering what God has done in the past- 'thus far has the Lord helped us'- stone of help- 'Ebenezer'- 1Sam 7:12. Meditate on scripture- 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. '-Jer 29:11. Pray when worried- Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:6-9)

CONDEMNATION- The cost to Jesus of our salvation- v49 '...it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people..'

- The heads of both the Jews and the Gentiles made the decision to condemn Jesus.
- Jesus was fully condemned by Caiaphas- ripped his high priest's garment
- The 6 trials of Jesus- Anas, Caiaphas, Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, Pilate. John says

in John 18:13 that Jesus was taken to Anas first before going to Caiaphas. Anas had been High Priest before, and although a role normally for life, the Romans insisted that they appoint the High Priest and they would depose and appoint as they saw necessary if the High Priests were out of line.

Annas officially served as High Priest for ten years (6–15 AD), when at the age of 36 he was deposed by the procurator Gratus 'for imposing and executing capital sentences which had been forbidden by the imperial government'. Yet while having been officially removed from office, he remained as one of the nation's most influential political and social individuals, aided greatly by the use of his five sons and his son-in-law (Caiaphas) as puppet High Priests until his assassination in 66 AD for advocating peace with Rome. - (Wikipedia)

- Condemned by religious and civil trial (first 3 religious, next 3 civil).
- All this means that our sin was well and truly punished in Christ.
'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' - Rom 8:1
- Everything that Caiaphas failed in regarding his role as high priest Jesus fulfilled perfectly. Jesus is YOUR high priest. He represents YOU before God the Father. You now have peace with God the Father through Jesus' blood. You can seek God's will through Jesus as the perfect mediator on our behalf- you have God's spirit inside you. Jesus carries YOU on His chest. YOUR name is inscribed on His nail scarred hands. Christ represents us in the true holy of holies- heaven itself. Forever lives to make intercession for us.
- A psychiatrist named Karl Menniger, wrote of seeing a stern-faced, plainly-dressed man (perhaps he was a crazed street person) standing one day on a street corner in busy Chicago. As pedestrians hurried by on their way to lunch or business, the man would solemnly lift his right arm, and pointing to some person near him, would shout at the top of his voice the single word, "Guilty!" Then, without any change of expression, he would stand stiffly for a few moments, and, then again, would repeat the gesture. He would raise his right arm, point at someone hurrying by, and shout the word, "Guilty!" "The effect of this strange ... pantomime on the passing strangers was extraordinary, almost eerie. They would stare at him, hesitate, look away, look at each other, and then at him again; then hurriedly continue on their ways. "One man, turning to another ... exclaimed, 'But how did he know?'"
- **Applic-** Are you still feeling condemned by your sins? Realise that Christ was fully condemned to death on your behalf, so you could be set free from judgement. Bring any sins that are on your conscience to Him and ask forgiveness, and choose to receive that forgiveness by faith. You may feel your sin is too great, but is it greater than the sin of the soldiers who crucified Christ for whom Jesus prayed for their forgiveness even as they drove the nails into His hands?
Accept by faith that the sinful nature was crucified with Christ

Summary

We have looked at the role of Caiaphas as a High Priest and regarding Jesus. We have noted his:

- HYPOCRISY- The futility of religion without relationship
- FEAR- The danger of allowing our fears to dictate to us
- CONDEMNATION- The cost to Jesus of our salvation

We have noted that where Caiaphas messed up as High Priest Jesus was and still is our perfect High Priest, now and evermore.

Song: Before the throne of God above