



**It Begins, Jesus with the Religious Professionals
Church Hurt is a Real Thing and Has a Very Long History
John 18:12-27**

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John 11:53

“So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.” (NASB 2020)

With those words from John, his commentary on the Sanhedrin’s conspiracy meeting which took place shortly after Lazarus was raised from the dead, we realize that the Temple leadership are committed to doing whatever they need to do in order to see Jesus dead.



They will play at following the legal process, but the desired conclusion, the death of this man Jesus, is one they are all driving to.

The planned operation is now in play and the various members of the conspiracy are intent on finishing their part to achieve their goal, the death of Jesus.

We are in the book of John. John's intent for writing the book is to show that Jesus Christ is God. There are things he covers that Matthew, Mark and Luke do not, and the reverse is also true.

Jesus is concerned for His disciples as His appointment for the cross approaches. They are about to be sifted by Satan, severely. Jesus is concerned for their physical safety, but also for their spiritual health and safety as well. The disciples are "the" plan for the spread of the gospel around the planet. There is no plan B.

As the church in the 21st century, we must understand that has not changed. We are "the" plan.

He charged the church to make disciples, and that is what we intend to do. Because once again, there is no Plan B for anyone other than the church to accomplish this task.

We have reached the point in our text where the cross is now only a few hours away. Jesus has allowed Himself to be apprehended. He has submitted to the will of the Father by allowing Himself to be bound and subjected to a legal process that will be turned on its head with numerous illegalities that will take place in order to create the fiction that Jesus is being crucified for a real capital crime.

We are going to meet a man, the leader of a religious family who, as we examine his life, will have more in common with the mob than with previous High Priests serving the living God in the Temple. His name is Annas. He is a Jew, and he is a Sadducee, and he is not an example of anything for us other than how pride can destroy a man and his entire family for all eternity.

Abuses had been taking place in the Temple off and on since Aaron. His two sons were the first to think they could approach God their way and things did not end well for them (Leviticus 10:1-2). We still see church leaders doing the same today.

Approaching the worship of God on their terms rather than His and doing ministry on their terms rather than His.

A little background of how this man, Annas, became a power broker and crime kingpin. Eventually being the head of one of the wealthiest and most hated families in Jerusalem. He did not start out that way. Under Rome, the High Priest had been deemed to be a political office and as such, the Romans took control of who was the High Priest. It was their way of controlling, or so they thought, the people of Judea.

Annas son of Seth served as high priest from AD 6 to 15, appointed by P. Sulpicius Quirinius, governor of the Roman province of Syria to which Judea was attached. Seth, the father of Annas, is an otherwise unknown member of a leading priestly family. Josephus connects Annas's appointment to the office of high priest to the events of the year AD 6 when Augustus deposed Archelaus, son of King Herod I, and sent him into exile in Vienne in Gaul...Annas was thus the first high priest serving under a Roman prefect after the imposition of Roman rule in Judea. (Schnabel 2018, 76-77)

As a criminal mastermind Annas developed his skills by learning how to deal with Rome. There is not a lot of difference between the way he operated from anyone else in history who oppressed and stole their way to the top. He just did so by looking like a religious leader at the same time. He was fleecing the flock along the way.



“Annas had been the high priest of Judaism’s supreme court from AD 6 to 15. Because Rome had conquered Israel, the Jews lost their former right to appoint their chief official, the high priest. (It would be equivalent to having our President selected by foreign invaders). Annas was put in office by Quirinius, the governor of Syria, ‘about the time Judea was reduced to the status of a minor Roman province.’ Annas was forced out of office nine years later by Valerius Gratus, Pilate’s predecessor. But his influence, however, continued undiminished.” For the next 50 years, his family controlled the Temple and they continued until Pilate was no longer procurator. (Gilmore 2001, 27)

Five sons of Annas were High Priests during that period, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was in possession of that office at the time of the trial of Jesus. (Kuehl 2013, 77)

Jesus had crossed this family early on when He cleansed the Temple in John 2:13-16. This was an event that was not forgotten. “We have seen what immense revenues the family of Annas must have derived from the Temple-booths, and how nefarious and unpopular was the traffic. The names of those bold, licentious, unscrupulous, degenerate sons of Aaron were spoken with whispered curses. Without referring to Christ’s interference with that Temple-traffic, which, if His authority had prevailed, would, of course, have been fatal to it, we can understand how antithetic in every respect a Messiah, and such a Messiah as Jesus, must have been to Annas.” (Edersheim 1896, 547)

Annas and his family, all members of the Sanhedrin and all Sadducees, were committed to the furtherance of their own power and riches and not much of anything else. He was not above buying whoever or whatever to obtain what he wanted. “One cash gift to a covetous Roman governor would mean that further favours required additional money. It was likely that special favours were done on the quiet for wealthy Annas and Caiaphas because they greased the palms of Pilate.” One thing we need to remember as well, none of the Sadducees were ever saved in the pages of the scriptures. (Gilmore 2001, 28)

John 18:12–14

“So the Roman cohort, the commander, and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him, and brought Him to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was in their best interest for one man to die in behalf of the people.” (NASB 2020)

Annas bankrolled this whole affair, so he insisted on being involved. It was to his house that Jesus was brought after His arrest, and there an informal and extra-judicial questioning of Him went on during the night hours (Mk. 14:53f., Mt. 26:57). (Bernard 1929, 590-591)

“The members of the Annas family were the main opponents of the early Christians. Their opposition began with Jesus’ trial in AD 30, in which both Annas and Caiaphas played the decisive role; Caiaphas was involved in the killing of Stephen in AD 30 (Acts 7:1); Annas the younger was involved in the execution of James the brother of Jesus, the leader of the Jerusalem church, in AD 62.” (Schnabel 2018, 77) Saul worked for them as a professional hit man, until confronting Jesus Christ outside of Damascus.

Why all the detail about this man? He was a Jewish Religious professional who was not interested in anything but His position, family and wealth.

Throughout the landscape of the church today, there are those who look like Annas. They may not have the government backing Annas did, but they have the position, money and power. And as Religious Leaders, they also manipulate those who believe they are teaching God’s word. Annas, as do some today, allowed pride to takeover.



It is not unusual to see rather questionable practices used in some corners of the business world, now being used regularly in some churches. Gaslighting, faith questioning, or targeted dismissals of volunteers is no longer unusual.

Many churches now have executive pastors on staff. Not a bad idea, until you dig deeper. They come from a business background in many cases and George Barna found that only 4% have a Biblical worldview. (Barna 2022)

No wonder.

It was good to be the High Priest. It was good to have servants and people who afforded you luxury simply because they believed you had an in with God. I am reminded of one High Priest who really was about the business of doing what the Lord wanted, yet we learn he still had a sin problem that needed to be resolved, Joshua.

Zechariah 3:1–7

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by. And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.” (ESV)

Joshua was cleansed of his sin, given clean clothes by the Lord, and then promised direct access to the divine council and the Lord as long as he remained faithful. That would also mean remaining humble.

When shepherds were in the Temple, the flock was loved and fed, but when there is a wolf in charge, the flock is fleeced. And a wolf was in charge almost from the point of incarnation. There are still those of the remnant who want to follow the Lord and serve Him, but these religious professionals made it all about them and they had no qualms about kicking folks out of the Temple, destroying lives, and otherwise hurting those who they should have been caring for.

They were proud of their position and that pride is what would ultimately destroy them. They became the shepherds doomed along with the flock that Zechariah talked about.

Zechariah 11:4–5

“Thus said the LORD my God: “Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the LORD, I have become rich,’ and their own shepherds have no pity on them.” (ESV)

Welcome to the family of Annas, powerbrokers of the Sanhedrin, rulers of the Temple. Supposed High Priests of the most high God.

I would say that it is those who lead the way they did, who are the source of a lot of church hurt we see around us today. I read about Annas and find myself checking my heart before the Lord because Annas did not start off that way. Pride took hold of him.



Annas wanted to make certain that the case, which could only be presented after sunrise to the Sanhedrin Court, had the “right “ evidence. It was at his home in Bethphage where the evidence was manufactured. Annas will privately question Jesus.

John 18:15–16

“Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard 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.” (NASB 2020)

Here is the picture so far. Judas led the Romans and the Temple Guards to Jesus and after showing He is God, Jesus, still in complete control, submits to the Romans and allows Himself to be bound. They then bring Him to Bethphage where the house of Annas is.

Judas is no longer needed and no longer discussed at this point. He was paid, used, and then thrown away. Just one more unneeded servant.

This type of conduct is also what we see with church hurt today as well. I am so thankful for everyone who has followed the Lord and serves here at Calvary. They are all heroes of the faith to me.

We always want to be in love with the Lord and serve those who serve Him as we all serve together. But that is not always the case.

My little brother was a budding electronic musician and he wanted to love the Lord through his music, so he wrote a song and was asked to play it at church. There were those in the church who loved what he did, but there were those in leadership who came to him privately and told him, basically, don't every do that again in this or any other church. Most likely the same folks who had said that to me years earlier over bringing rock worship music to church. It hurt me, but for my little brother, he has never been back to church since.

We want and need the entire body of Christ to work together and serve together or we simply cannot do church. It is imperative that we also learn to give grace to those who follow the Lord in faith and step out. We all don't do it perfectly the first time, none of us do. But the Lord will take our faith and the spiritual gifts He has given you and then begin to grow you and use you.

I have watched that happen here at Calvary and it blows me away to see how God uses us.

Getting back to our text, as the arrest takes place, most of the disciples, at this point, bail on Jesus. We only read about two following and of those, only one will be at the crucifixion. But for now, Peter and another disciple are following from a distance. We are not told who the second disciple is. Tradition holds it to be John, but we really are not sure.

Whoever Peter is with has some serious contacts they can rely on. This disciple was known to Annas and as such they would be allowed into the home quarters of Annas without any issue at all. In fact, this unnamed disciple had serious pull with Annas and could even vouch for ready shoot aim Peter and get him into the doorway.

Annas cannot be the one who makes any official verdict though, it will have to be his son in law Caiaphas.

But he will ask some questions.



Peter and this unnamed disciple are in the courtyard witnessing the proceedings taking place. It is there that the doorkeeper, who let Peter in, questions him.

There are strong arguments that this is John who is known to the family of Annas, but nothing in our text to point to and for John this is not all that unusual.

For example, we are never told the name of the disciple of John the Baptist who follows Jesus in John 1. The mother of Jesus is never mentioned by name anywhere in John. Then there is the woman at the well, who is she? Or the boy with the loaves and fish.

We also need to remember, that there were more than 12 disciples to include Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and others.

John 18:17–18

“Then the slave woman who was the doorkeeper 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 was also with them, standing and warming himself.” (NASB 2020)

A logical question in light of the knowledge within the household of the unnamed disciple. He just vouched for Peter to come in, so she asks a question wanting to know if Peter was also a disciple. Peter decides to lie.

Let’s look at this from Peter’s perspective. Less than an hour ago, he tried to kill a man and all he did was remove the ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. This brought him serious unwanted attention from the Romans and even Jesus had to intervene and heal the man since Peter was insistent on helping God out.

God does not need our help.

So here he is, following Jesus from a distance and associating with other servants of the high priest. Colleagues of the same man he had just tried to behead.

It makes me wonder if Malchus is looking right at him from the side as she asks the question.

Peter makes a decision, one he previously denied he would do. But here, Peter with his statement, ceases to be aligned with Jesus, and has now aligned with His enemies by his denial. How do we react when we are confronted by the world about Jesus?

When I was doing Christian radio in Austin, Texas, there were many who “knew” me by my voice but not my face. Every so often, we would be out some where and I would be talking with Dianne, or say something to a cashier and someone would ask, are you that guy on KNLE? Cornered. You see, I also had recorded hours of Bible verses which were being played regularly as well. I always answered yes.

Peter though, is recognized. He has been seen with Jesus; he speaks with a Galilean accent too. Logical question. Peter denies Jesus. He is now following at a distance, but now he no longer identifies with the King. Something else may be going on in Peter’s head too. Remember, he has a sword and that didn’t work out too well the first time around. He has pride and he has the same skill we all have, the ability to talk ourselves into and out of almost anything.

I believe Frederick Bruner may have provided some excellent insight in his take on the first denial.



“I think Peter is bracing himself for a bold public confession of Jesus in the presence of the much more formidable, fearsome, and influential Annas. (Peter won’t use a knife again; he learned his lesson in the garden; but he will, he hopes, bear courageous witness to Jesus inside at the big meeting and so finally prove, in Jesus’ own presence, that Peter’s courage was vastly underrated by his Lord.) And so what is a “mere girl” at a little gate in comparison with all these more significant realities? If Peter is to confess Jesus in the powerful and influential way that Peter believes Jesus wants to be confessed, then he has to get past this “nobody” girl. Peter may have honestly felt that his very casual and even offhanded “not me” to a mere gatekeeper could not possibly count as a “real” denial of Jesus in person; it is a tactical and perfectly reasonable move (that Jesus would well understand), made only in order to get Peter closer to Jesus in the big test to come that really mattered—inside the hall before the big court of the early Church.” (Bruner 2012, 1052)

The question comes from a woman, a slave to boot, and out of the blue. He had no way to prepare for this, we never do when it really happens to us in life.

By the way, Peter’s first denial was not only a denial of Jesus but was also a denial of being one of the disciples as well. We may not think we are denying Jesus either when we are asked if we go to church, and we say no. But when we say no, we are doing like Peter did, separating ourselves from the Lord and identifying with the one who asked.

Peter answers and then immediately goes off elsewhere so he does not have to answer anymore questions. He has moved to the fire and is now trying to blend in.

John 18:19–24

“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 synagogues and in the temple area, where all the Jews congregate; and I said nothing in secret. Why are you asking Me? Ask those who have heard what I spoke to them. Look: these people know what I said.” But when He said this, one of the officers, who was 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.” (NASB 2020)

This hearing with Annas “cannot properly be called a trial, violating, as we shall see, the procedural rules of Jewish criminal law. But it lends credence to the accusation that the Jewish leaders never intended to give Jesus a formal trial.” (Forman 1990, 107)

This interview is nothing more than a fishing expedition for the purposes of obtaining something that could be used against Jesus in a more formal setting later.

What are the questions he asks Jesus? He asked about His disciples and about His teaching. The reality though is more personal than that, this man in front of him had personally stopped cash making activities on behalf of his family on at least two occasions even inferring that all who were involved were nothing better than thieves. Common criminals. He also felt as if Jesus was intent on overthrowing the priesthood by inciting rebellion against their edicts. He added in the disciples because Annas also wanted them gone as well.

They got away and they shouldn’t have.

The questions asked by Annas reveal he had a pride problem. He believed he was above the law and could operate outside of it with impunity. He was also caught up in his own greed, Jesus threatened a money-making enterprise and had to be dealt with. “When the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70, Annas’ personal fortune amounted to two and one-half billion pieces of silver.” (Gilmore 2001, 33)



What began as annoyance at the beginning was, by now, full blown hate. Annas wanted Jesus dead.

What Jesus taught and said was all public. It was not secret. But the line of questioning from Annas seemed to point that He was working in secret when the reality was the reverse. This is why Jesus answered the way He did, that plus Jesus knew the law. "Annas should have asked those who heard him, because in official proceedings it was not the accused who was interrogated, but the witnesses for and against the accused. Jesus thus unveils the ignorance of Annas of Jewish Law." (Kanagaraj 2013, 176)

The line of questioning shows that blasphemy has not yet been broached as a crime to accuse Him of. Annas was probably trying to prove up the crime of leading the people astray and he wanted to include the disciples in this as well.

A Temple guard appears to have been annoyed by the manner in which Jesus answered, which was per the law. So, he slaps Jesus. That is the first act of violence done to Jesus.

Jesus immediately challenges the blatantly illegal act of this guard challenging him to prove that Jesus broke the law with His comment.

Annas witnessed this and should have taken immediate action against the Temple guard, but he does nothing.

Instead, he has Jesus bound again and sent to his son in law who is the high priest.

With Jesus now being transferred to undergo another illegal hearing, the focus switches back to Peter. Remember, Peter is trying as hard as possible to be incognito. He wants no one to see him or recognize him.

He is in the process of learning that once you have been with Jesus, those days are gone forever. Also, there is that other problem, Peter did indeed try to remove Malchus' head earlier in the evening and some of the slaves around him, may have been there to witness the event.

John 18:25–27

"Now Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not one of His disciples as well, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, who was related to the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed." (NASB 2020)

Obviously, a cold evening out. Peter fell asleep rather than pray earlier in the evening when he had the chance. He was also suffering from a bit of pride as well since when told he would deny Jesus, he denied that was even possible. Jesus prayed for him, and Peter should have prayed for strength, but he had no idea he would need that. After all, he's Peter.

Peter has no business being here, none whatsoever. The unnamed disciple knew folks and he was okay being there, but not Peter.

As Christians, we are all different ages in the Lord, and we all have very different backgrounds. Some of us would have no issue at all walking into a bar with someone who is unsaved to continue a conversation with them about the Lord. But then there are some of us, who have no business ever going into a bar ever again.

We need to be careful and not assume that the freedom we have in Christ, is the same as a brother or sister who may have come from an entirely different square.



How often do we step out to serve the Lord, faithfully following Him, yet neglect spending time with Him in prayer beforehand? We have all done it.

I spend time praying for our time together on Sundays all during the week. But it is so easy to get busy and not do so. Those times when that happens, and they are not frequent, are usually the times little things happen to get in the way.

Nothing we do happens unless we pray and talk to the Lord about it first. The Lord will build His church and He does so by prayer.

Here in John, we see Peter still standing by the fire trying to stay warm. Why he has stayed there, in the middle of those who would do him harm, is in itself pretty amazing. He should go elsewhere. Peter is not a wimp. How many of us would do the same thing, warm up at a campfire in the house of an enemy who wants you and your master, dead. Not me. He still is packing too, but remember, he never made range day with the sword.

As he is standing there, “they” question him. It appears his presence has brought the attention of a few more folks. This is not just one of the slaves asking now, this is now the temple police as well as some of the officials that were out in Gethsemane earlier in the evening.

Everyone is standing around trying to keep warm and a few look up and see this guy who looks a lot like the one we saw earlier this evening with the sword. So “they” question Peter. Now they are accusing him of being one of the disciples. Peter denies it.

Now this is not an off the cuff question and denial. This is now a save your own skin denial. There is a level of recognition taking place in the group and after watching him for awhile, a few are beginning to put some of the pieces from earlier in the evening together.

The only thing that could be worse is if an eyewitness who happens to be related to Malchus shows up.

John 18:26–27

“One of the slaves of the high priest, who was related to the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.” (NASB 2020)

Ready fire aim Peter has just been confronted with his worst nightmare. He was ready to begin the revolution on behalf of the conquering Messiah, only to find out Jesus was not here to follow Peter’s preconceived notions about Messiah.

Now Jesus is arrested and being questioned and Peter, has shown up in a place he has no place being. It would be like assisting someone to escape from the police by attacking one of them, then running off, and then showing up later that same evening in the breakroom for coffee with the same group who you attacked. Why would you do this?

The guards are putting the pieces together and on top of this, a relative who is an eyewitness to the missed head cleaving has shown up.

Peter denies everything. I am sure he is showing all of the signs of deception by now as he adds to his basic denial and in mid-deny, he hears a rooster crow. Now he leaves. Probably very quickly.

What Peter has just done is no better than what Judas has just done. He has denied Jesus and sided with the enemy, but unlike Judas, who will be sorry for his failure and sin but not repent, Peter is broken.



How could God ever forgive him for what he just did, how could Jesus ever forgive him, how could Peter even forgive himself.

Why is this here? To show us Peter is no different than any of us. He is not superman. His presence and the very public failure of his denial and repentance are tell us that we truly must take Jesus at His word when He says we must abide in Him.

If Peter could fall, then anyone can fall. None of us are exempt if even the strongest and most outspoken can find himself where Peter found himself. Everyone else bailed, Peter followed. But Peter failed in a place where only the bravest would dare to go, right into the home of the enemy.

Peter loved Jesus and even up to the sword moment he had this idea of the conquering Messiah as the one he was following. I am sure that as he swung that sword, he believed it was to be the first blow in the Messianic revolution. Oops. He still had not put together that Jesus would first have to suffer and go to the cross. He got it wrong.

Peter was the best, and he failed. How do we prevent this in our life?

Fully understand what Jesus said in John 15:5c "...apart from Me you can do nothing." (NASB 2020)
1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray with ceasing. (NASB2020)

Abide in Christ. Be in the vine, not around it or close to it, but in Christ is where we belong.

And it all starts right now. Recommit your life today to being not just a follower of Jesus, but one who is growing and becoming more like Him.

1 John 1:9

"But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness." (NET 2nd ed.)

Let's pray.



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