

Location: Difficult Scriptures

Question on Directory: Were there two different High Priests at the time of Jesus' crucifixion?

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Two High Priests

Question:

Why do the gospels of Matthew and John refer to Caiaphas as the high priest during the end of Jesus' ministry (see Mt 26:57; Jn 11:49), while Luke's gospel indicates that a man name Annas was the high priest (Lk 3:2; see also Ac 4:6)?

Why was Annas referred to as the high priest?

Our Answer:

Annas was appointed to the office of high priest in A.D. 6 by Quirinius, governor of Syria. He was later removed from that position in A.D. 15 by Valerius Gratus, governor of Judea. However, since the Old Testament dictated that the high priest was to fill the office for life (Num. 3:10), Annas' removal was considered illegal by most Jews. For this reason they may have continued to regard him as their spiritual leader.

Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas (John 18:13), served as high priest for nine years (A.D. 27-36), including the entire ministry of the Messiah, as well as the whole of Pontus Pilate's administration. Some authorities believe that at this time Annas was appointed president of the Sanhedrim, or deputy high priest, and thus was also called high priest (Luke 3:2).

Jesus was initially brought before Annas on the eve of His crucifixion, a fact that is only recorded in John's gospel (John 18:19-23). Some authorities have suggested that this was done because Annas was regarded with great respect and seen as an expert in the religious matters of the Jews. As such he may have been instrumental in formulating the actual charges against the Messiah. However, after being briefly questioned by Annas, Jesus was sent to Caiaphas where His actual trial took place (Matt. 26:57-68).