

The High Priest Speaks

Let me introduce myself. My name is Caiaphas. I was the Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem in the year 30 A.D. My appointment as High Priest came from the Roman authorities. Israel was really a Church State then. The religious leaders (me) were also the leaders of the country. The Romans, when they conquered a land, allowed local authorities to continue to govern as long as there was no rebellion and the taxes to Rome were paid. So Rome allowed me to be both religious leader and Head of State as long as there was no trouble.

To understand what happened to the man that you call the Christ, you need to understand how important the Law, originally the Ten commandments, was to us. Over the 1000 years from when God gave them to Moses to the time of Jesus, the Law had been interpreted to make it clearer. For example, one of the commandments is to keep the Sabbath holy. Well, what exactly does that mean? If your work horse falls in a ditch on the Sabbath, is it alright to work to get it out? Over the 1000 years these questions were considered and laws put in place. So along comes an uneducated son of a carpenter. I'm not sure but I think that He worked as a carpenter himself for many years before He decides to declare himself an itinerant preacher and teacher. And He starts upsetting the people and their loyalty to Israel (me). He goes around telling the people that they don't have to follow all the Laws. And, on top of that, he announces that He has a new Commandment "Love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12) Can you imagine that? God gave us the first ten and this upstart out of nowhere decides to add another one! All this caused the people to question ALL the laws. It caused the people to question ME! And, on top of everything else, He went around questioning our wisdom and authority and called us all sorts of names, such as a "brood of snakes." The crowning blow came when the people declared Him King and made a big procession, throwing palm branches and even their own garments into the road so that not even the feet of the donkey on which he rode would get dirty. Who did the people think they were putting in charge? Did they really think that I would work for HIM?

Now I understand that your country has, from early in its history, focused on individual freedoms. And I certainly admire that. But, when you are a conquered country, there are limits to what you

can do. Often I had to focus on accomplishing the greatest good for the greatest number. If I had allowed Jesus to continue on, there almost certainly would have been a rebellion. Indeed there was one forty years later. People would have been hurt. Roman law would have been stricter. (And I would have lost my job and position in society.) So I began to look for a way to put an end to all His trouble causing. I found a few guards that I could bribe to lie about what Jesus had said and done. But it was not until His disciple Judas came to me with the proposal that he would betray Jesus that my plan really started to come together! Now times were very different back then. We had jails, but they were meant to hold people for a short time. There was none of this locking people up for years. Instead the jails held people only until they could be physically punished, such as whipping. But, even after He had been whipped (and I admit that the guards DID get a little carried away), Jesus refused to promise not to continue on as He had. So, if I was to protect the country from rebellion, and keep my job, I had to send Him to Pilate to be executed. They even tore down our beautiful temple. Now I hope you understand why I did what I did. You do understand, don't you?

(Author's Note: My reason for writing this very hypothetical article is show how we can talk ourselves into believing that what is good for us is good for everyone. Instead, God calls us to let Him be Lord and to follow Him. I encourage you to read the descriptions of Jesus' passion and death at the end of each of the Gospels.)

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