

The question which is always brought up regarding the Crucifixion of Jesus, is “who was responsible?” The archaic answer of the Middle Ages was “The Jews”, ignoring that everything in our Bible (Old and New) is about this people of God. Whenever cultures look for who to blame for problems, Non-Jews blamed Jews. More, in Jerusalem at Passover, the Sanhedrin, Chief Priests, Pharisees, Disciples, Jesus, ALL were Jewish!

So this day, when we remember the Crucifixion of our Savior, we go back to the story. Last evening, as we shared the Passover Seder, we recalled that after the meal was over, after they had sung a hymn, Jesus and the Disciples went to the Garden at Gethsemane to pray. They left the Upper Room, the dining hall above the sarcophagus of King David and walked out onto the main streets, crowded with people, everyone taking a long walk after the Seder meal. Being Festival season, the streets were crowded with visitors and residents, family and friends, all dressed in festive colorful clothing from the far corners of the world. And in a world BEFORE Podcasts and Television, there was a hum like the buzzing of bees from all the many conversations.

The disciples were not part of that crowd, discussing the days events, discussing the politics of the day. Judas had abruptly left the meal first. No one was quite certain what was going to happen next...

Jesus led the eleven down dark streets, avoiding the crowds, as they made their way past Gehenna, past the Cemetery of the Dead, out of the Old City. Although Passover was the biggest celebration of the year, the crescendo after Jesus Royal Entry, the 12 walked in silence following where Jesus led.

Just as one of the disciples had found the room where they celebrated Passover, someone had made arrangements to get the key to unlock the Gate to the small Olive Orchard near the bottom of the Kidron Valley. As they went inside the Garden to pray, each searched for a comfortable place out of the wind. Jesus asked that the 4, Andrew, Peter, James and John, stay with him for a while, as they wound deeper into the Garden, Jesus attempted to explain yet again what was going to take place.

It may have been the late hour, bellies filled with rich food or too many glasses of wine, after learning to interpret life through him for these three years, they had difficulty understanding what he was saying to them. Jesus invited them to sit, while he went a short distance away to pray by himself. Alone with God, Jesus began to ask if it were possible that his sacrifice could be avoided, if they could all go home again. Jesus who had been able to explain everything, to teach his disciples the meaning of relationship with God, the meaning of sacrifice, the meaning of love, prayed and prayed for God to answer. Hearing no escape, Jesus vowed to accept whatever he was asked to do. Rising up, Jesus found his disciples asleep, not just once but three times over!

Before we could be clear whether he understood the weariness of their humanity, or if he was disappointed and angry at their lack of stamina, the Gate to the Garden was opened by Judas and mob of others. Each Gospel describes them differently, Soldiers of the Roman Legion, Police, Servants and Lieutenants of the High Priests and Scribes, or a mob of thugs and mercenaries paid to do the dirty work. Some say Judas pointed out Jesus, others that he embraced Jesus, even that he betrayed him with a Kiss. In that moment, it seemed Chaos was unleashed, as the Disciples of Jesus fought with those who had come. The ear of one was cut off, and Jesus healed the man. Still Jesus was arrested, bound and led away, as Jesus faithful disciples all ran through the Garden in opposite directions into the shadows of the dark.

John describes that they marched Jesus back across the City, to the Palace of ANNAS, Father-in-Law of the Current High Priest of the Temple: CAIAPHAS. Over 6 years, five of ANNAS' Sons, as well as his Son-in-Law held the role of High Priest, following which Annas was next in line to become High Priest after CAIAPHAS. In many ways, the Father or Father-in-Law was the most powerful individual, because ANNAS had all the dignity and power, was able to command what he wanted done, politically vested in resolving problems as quietly and expeditious as possible without the accountability of being elected the High Priest. Was the High Priest's Office arresting Jesus, a normal routine? NO, but one of those situations in which following LEGAL PROCESS was not as important as SEEKING CONTROL as quickly as possible.

According to tradition, Annas was not among the mob arresting Jesus. When they arrived, the High Priest's palace had a dungeon under the house. Those arrested were taken to a 30 foot deep pit beneath the dungeon, at the bottom was a 20 x 20' cell, where they dropped the accused into the dark. When it was time for Trial before the High Priest, a rope was lowered into the hole, for the prisoner to tie round their waist in order to be pulled out. There were no doors or windows, a mud floor with no conveniences. When prisoners were drawn up out of the hole, they were doused with water to make them presentable to stand before the High Priest. There is no account of what was said during Jesus' trial before Annas.

Jesus was then transferred to Caiaphas' Palace. The High Priest's Palace was built on a Hillside, with an outer Courtyard, a doorway which led to an inner courtyard. The beloved Disciple JOHN and PETER followed to this outer Courtyard. John was known to Caiaphas the HIGH PRIEST and went along with Jesus to stand before him. Simon Peter stood at the door outside, warming himself by a Charcoal fire. Here a Servant Girl who stood at the Door asked Peter was asked "ARE YOU NOT ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES?" And Peter said I AM NOT.

The High Priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his teachings. Jesus responded: "I spoke openly to the world. I taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple to the people; yet in secret have I said nothing." Why do you ask me? Ask those who listened to me, what I have said to them: Behold, they know what I said." One of the Officers who stood by Jesus struck him with the palm of his hand, challenging: "Do you answer the High Priest So?" Jesus replied "If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil: but if I have spoken well, why strike me?"

A second time, as Peter stood warming himself, they asked him: "ARE YOU NOT ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES?" Peter denied, saying "I AM NOT!"

A servant who was a kinsman to the High Priest, the one whom Peter had struck with a sword cutting off his ear, which Jesus had restored said: "DID I NOT SEE YOU IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM?" Peter denied again, as the sun began to rise and the Cock crowed.

As the sun was rising, they delivered Jesus from Caiaphas Palace to the Roman Judgement Hall. They dared not enter, lest they be defiled during the time of Passover. Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor of Israel and Palestine came out to them. "What accusation bring you against this man?" "If he had not committed a crime we would not have brought him to you." Pilate retorted "Take him and judge him according to your own laws." They replied "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Pilate went inside to the Judgement Hall and said unto Jesus "ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?" Jesus replied "DO YOU SAY THIS OF YOUR OWN CONVICTION OF DID OTHERS GIVE THIS WITNESS TO YOU?" Pilate replied: "AM I A JEW?" Your own Nation and Chief Priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered "MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. IF MY KINGDOM WERE OF THIS WORLD, THEN MY SERVANT WOULD FIGHT FOR ME, BUT NOW IS MY KINGDOM NOT FROM HERE."

Pilate asked: "ARE YOU THEN A KING?" Jesus replied: "YOU SAY I AM A KING. TO THIS END I WAS BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH. EVERY ONE THAT IS OF THE TRUTH WILL HEAR MY VOICE." Pilate questioned "WHAT IS TRUTH?"

Pilate left him and went back out to the crowd saying "I FIND NO FAULT IN THIS MAN. NO FAULT AT ALL." "You have a custom, that I should release one captive for you at Passover. Would you then have me release to you the King of the Jews?" The crowd responded: "NOT THIS MAN BUT BARABAS!" Now Barabas was a Thief, a Robber, an Insurrectionist and Rapist.

Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. The soldiers platted a crown of thorns and shoved it upon his head. They draped a purple Robe on him, and said "HAIL KING OF THE JEWS" and gesturing struck him in the face with their hands.

Jesus was brought out before the crowd, wearing the purple robe and crown of thorns, as Pilate declared to them: "BEHOLD THE MAN!" The Chief Priests and Officers rallied the crowd shouting "CRUCIFY HIM" "CRUCIFY HIM!" Pilate judged: Take the man and crucify him, for I FIND NO FAULT IN HIM." The people responded "WE HAVE A LAW; BY ONE LAW HE OUGHT TO DIE BECAUSE HE MADE HIMSELF OUT TO BE GOD." When Pilate, heard this, he was all the more afraid and sought to release Jesus. But the world cried out: "IF YOU LET THIS MAN GO, YOU ARE NOT CAESAR'S FRIEND. WHOEVER MAKES HIMSELF A KING SPEAKS AGAINST CAESAR!"

Pilate asked, "SHALL I THEN CRUCIFY YOUR KING?" And they shouted "WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR!" They took Jesus and led him away.