

66 “RULER OF THIS WORLD” IS NOT SATAN

Introduction: Jesus referenced “The ruler of this world” three times in the book of John (Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). It is commonly assumed this “ruler” was a supernatural deity named Satan. But Yahweh always has been and always will be the ruler of the world (Ps 103:19, Jer 10:10, Dan 5:21, 2 Chr 20:6, etc). We maintain “this world” was the Mosaic Covenant World, and the “ruler” was the corrupt first century Jewish religious system, generally speaking, and the High Priesthood, specifically. This was the adversary or satan in Judea at this time. (See P.P. #60, #61)

Background: Annas officially served as High Priest from AD 6 to 15 and Caiaphas from AD 18 to 36. It appears, during Caiaphas’ tenure, Annas was, functionally, a co-High Priest. Annas and Caiaphas were both “Chief Priests,” that is “Archpriests,” an elite rank referenced often in the gospels (See note). “During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John [the Baptist]...” Luke 2:3 (approximately the year AD 28).

1. Scripture interprets scripture. Rulers of the Mosaic Covenant World were Jewish leaders. “When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you should make your defense or what you should say...” Lk 12:11

2. Shortly before His arrest, Jesus said, “The ruler of this world is coming,” “I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, but I am doing just what the Father commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.” Jn. 14:30-31

3. Those who came to arrest Jesus included the Chief Priests and other high temple officials: “Jesus said to the Chief Priests, captains of the temple, and elders, who had come against Him, ‘Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?’” Lk 22:52

4. Jesus called the arresting leader(s) “the power of darkness”. “Day after day when I was with you in the temple courts, you did not arrest me. But this is your hour, and that of the power of darkness!” Lk 22:53

5. Leaders conspired together at Caiaphas’ palace to arrest and kill Jesus: “Then the Chief Priests and the elders of the people met together in the palace of the High Priest, who was named Caiaphas. They planned to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him.” Mt 26:3-4

6. After His arrest, the High Priest Annas questioned Jesus first. “They brought Him first to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest...” Jn 18:13

7. Next, Jesus was taken to Caiaphas for interrogation: “Now the ones who had arrested Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, in whose house the experts in the law and the elders had gathered.” Mt 26:57

8. Chief Priests tried to devise false testimony against Jesus: “The Chief Priests and the whole Sanhedrin were trying to find false testimony against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. But they did not find anything, though many false witnesses came forward.” Mt 26:59-60

9. High Priest Caiaphas delivered Jesus to the Romans thus he incurred greater guilt than Pilate, who ordered His execution. “Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor’s residence.” Jn 18:28 “...the one who handed me [Jesus] over to you [Pilate] is guilty of greater sin.” Jn 19:11

10. Chief Priests tried to portray Jesus as inciting the people—perhaps to zealotry: “Then Pilate said to the Chief Priests and the crowds, ‘I find no basis for an accusation against this man.’ But they persisted in saying, ‘He incites the people by teaching throughout all Judea. It started in Galilee and ended up here!’” Lk 23:4-5

11. Chief Priests accused Jesus of crimes: “The Chief Priests and the experts in the law were there, vehemently accusing Him.” Lk 23:10

12. Leaders were envious of Jesus: “He [Pilate] knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.” Mt 27:18

13. The Roman governor found Jesus innocent of all charges: “Then Pilate called together the Chief Priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. When I examined Him before you, I did not find this man guilty of anything you accused Him of doing...’” Lk 23:13-15

14. Chief Priests incited the crowd to crucify Jesus: When the Chief Priests and their officers saw him, they shouted out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said, "You take Him and crucify Him! Certainly I find no reason for an accusation against Him!" Jn 19:6

15. Chief Priests incited the crowd to call for the release of Barabbas and kill Jesus: "But the Chief Priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed." Mt 27:20

16. Leaders blackmailed Pilate (The man who appointed Pilate as governor had recently been executed by the emperor for treason. Any charge that caused Pilate to appear to be disloyal to Emperor Tiberius would likely have caused him panic.): "From this point on, Pilate tried to release him. But the Jewish leaders shouted out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Everyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!'" Jn 19:12.

17. High Priests allied with Rome, not God. "Pilate asked, 'Shall I crucify your king?' The High Priests replied, 'We have no king except Caesar!' Then Pilate handed Him over... to be crucified." Jn 19:15-16

18. Chief Priests had hired Judas to betray Jesus: "Now when Judas... saw that Jesus had been condemned, he regretted what he had done and returned the thirty silver coins to the Chief Priests and the elders..." Matt 27:3

19. Chief Priests bribed soldiers to cover up the resurrection: "Some of the guard... told the Chief Priests everything that had happened. After they had assembled with the elders and formed a plan, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came at night and stole His body while we were asleep.'" Mt. 28:11-13

MORE EVIDENCE FIRST CENTURY JEWISH LEADERSHIP WAS THE "POWER OF DARKNESS"

A. Leaders wanted to kill Lazarus in addition to Jesus: "So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too..." Jn 12:9-11

B. Leaders understood Jesus was from God, but determined to stop Him to keep their status: "So the Chief Priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many miraculous signs. If we allow him to go on in this way, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our sanctuary and our nation.'" Jn 11:47-48

C. In the Parable of the Tenants, (Mt. 21:33-43), Jesus taught those who would kill Him, knowingly killed God's Son: "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and get his inheritance!'" Mt 21:38

Summary: We have shown the "ruler of this world", also translated "prince of this world", to be the High Priesthood specifically and corrupt Jewish religious establishment generally. When rightly translated, **satan means adversary and the devil means the slanderous. These roles were amply fulfilled by real people.** First century Judaic leaders were of the lineage of Cain, who killed his brother. They were offspring of the serpent whose nature it is to always lie. This should be kept in mind as we seek to interpret other New Testament passages traditionally ascribed to "Satan" or "the devil". "You people are from your father the devil [the slanderous], and you want to do what your father desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies." Jn 8:44

NOTES:

"High Priest" and "Chief Priest": In the Old Testament, "high priest" and "chief priest" were used interchangeably and refer to the one priest who was appointed to lead all the other priests until his death. The appointment of the High Priest changed over the years so that in the New Testament, there could be any number of High Priests alive at any one time, although, only one executed the duties. "Chief priests" (plural) is found only in the NT and means literally "archpriests." The title "high priest" was a lifetime title. (Acts 4:6).

Zealots in Galilee: "According to historian Hayim Hillel Ben-Sasson, the Sicarii, [dagger men, assassins] were originally based in Galilee" (see Wikipedia). "Robber" was a common vernacular for a zealot, used often by Josephus.

"Satan" means adversary, opponent.

Other Preterist Papers on "Satan": #59, #60, #61, #62, #63, #64

Pilate's dilemma: About a year before the trial of Jesus, news reached Pilate that Senjanus, along with other friends of Pilate, had been executed for plotting against Tiberius Caesar. Being charged with treason against the emperor would most certainly mean death.

"The devil" means the slanderous. Slanderous means false and malicious.