

Passover
2011
The
Mysteries of
the Passion
Week

**Mystery #1:
How Could Jesus Celebrate
the Passover, be Crucified on
the Passover, and be Buried
before the Passover?**

Introduction

The Passover is the Celebration of the Lamb of God, the gracious sacrifice God provided for the enslaved Israelites in Egypt, to foreshadow the deliverance of all mankind from slavery to sin by Jesus Christ.

The only ritual commanded to the Church is the Passover of the Last Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Introduction

The Hebrew sacred year began with the month of Abib during which the early barley harvest began the ripening process, the stage called *abib*, such that during the Days of Unleavened Bread the wave sheaf offering of the fresh barley could be made as the first of the Firstfruits. With this offering the barley harvest could commence.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In the time of Jesus there were two, and possibly more, conflicting and opposing Jewish calendar systems at work.

This should quickly become evident if you attempt to harmonize the gospel accounts of the events of the passion week.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

This multiple calendar situation should come as no great surprise.

In Herodian times Judaism was not a unitary religion but a collection of sects reflecting a far greater range of cultural diversity than often recognized (Howlett 1957:171; Bowker 1969:7-8; Johnson 1976:14-15).

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In this sociocultural milieu the priests and the Sanhedrin followed a luni-solar calendar.

The Essenes, on the other hand, adhered to a strictly solar calendar.

This meant that for the most part the two groups kept the Passover at different times.

The Essene Calendar

The Essene calendar, attested in I Enoch and the Book of Jubilees, consisted of a solar calendar of 364 days divided into seven-day weeks, twelve months of thirty days each except for one extra day in the last month of each quarter (Jaubert 1965:27; Pfeiffer 1969:64-65; Vanderkam 1998:55; Finegan 1998:44).

Essene Calendar

The use of their own calendar was a most particular way in which members of the sect differentiated themselves from the rest of Israel.

They celebrated their festivals on different dates, with the deliberate intention of differentiating themselves from the other Jews.

This is a phenomenon typical of many sects throughout the world.

Even among the Jews, the Samaritan calendar is different from the Karaite one, and both differ from the common Jewish one.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The calendar of the "Sages, of the whole House of Israel", was different from the Essene one, not only in the dating of the festivals, but in its whole conception of the year.

The Essenes had a sophisticated solar calendar, in which there were fifty two weeks, and the festivals always began on the same day of the week.

In this they were different from other Jews, who lived by a lunar calendar.(Flusser 1989:43.)

The Essene Calendar

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles, and Feast of the Great Day (the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles), always began on Wednesday, actually on Tuesday evening as the Jews begin their days at evening not midnight (Jaubert 1965:10; Simon 1967:73).

The Essene Calendar

Trumpets, Tabernacles, and the Great Day always occurred in the seventh month as set forth in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 23:24-44).

As Nisan 15, the annual Sabbath, or Passover Sabbath, marking the start of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened bread began at sunset Tuesday night, the Essene observance of the Passover Seder was always on a Tuesday night (Finegan 1998:43, 48).

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In CE 30, however, the two calendars overlapped resulting in two Nisan 14's, just one day apart, thus the two Passover celebrations occurring in the same week of April and one day apart.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In Jesus' time, the Pharisees and most Jews kept the Passover of the Jews, the Mosaic Passover, at the end of the fourteenth day and into the evening portion of the fifteenth.

There is some scholarly debate concerning whether or not the priests fixed the calendar for any given year by calculation, by observation, or a combination of the two. Exodus 12:40 records that God informed the people of Israel that the month of their first Passover and Exodus from Egypt, the month of Abib, would be the beginning of months for them.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In Jewish tradition the early Hebrew Calendar, with its 19-year lunar-solar pattern, came into being at the time of Adam and Eve.

God provided, according to this tradition, more details about calendar calculations to the Levitical priests with the inception of the Sinaitic covenant. Exodus 12:40 states that at the end of 430 years "to the very day" (NASB) the people of Israel went out from Egypt.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

Kenneth Herrmann, in *Calendar Eclipse Interrelationships*, holds that these ancient Israelites could not have left Egypt "430 years (from the date of the covenant with Abraham when he was 99) *even to the selfsame day*, unless *a very careful count of days as well as years had been kept*" (Herrmann 1969:15-16).

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The Levitical priest-astronomers kept the rules and their methods for determination of the beginning of years, months, festivals, and annual Sabbaths a closely-held secret.

In the Herodian period the Sadducees, who wanted complete political control, and the Pharisees who desired to dominate all aspects of Jewish religious life eroded the authority of the priests.

Control over the calendar legitimized power and both groups sought it.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In the Herodian period the priest-astronomers retained the power and authority to determine the new year and the appointed times for the festivals and annual Sabbaths.

Nevertheless, the Sanhedrin, given certain powers of civil and religious administration by the Romans, held sufficient power to independently verify and officially proclaim them.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

This they did with observers posted on mountain tops, sending confirmation of the first visible crescent of the new moon by signal fires, by huddling in open displays of deep deliberation ensuring the public that the priest-astronomers were truthful, and then by sounding the trumpet to proclaim the new moon.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

This focused the people on the authority of the Sanhedrin not that of the Levitical priests.

The irony is that the Sanhedrin, in all probability, already knew exactly when the first crescent would appear by priest-astronomer calculation but they put on this symbolic show to promote their own authority and agenda.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The Sadducees, supplemented by leading priests, dominated the Sanhedrin, keeping the Pharisees at bay.

The Pharisees, the minority faction, balked on how the priests determined the Feast of Weeks, known as the day of Pentecost, but were not able to do anything about that matter until after the collapse of the priesthood in CE 70.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

Passover Sabbath (the first High Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) always occurs with a full moon rising in the east, the 15th day after the new moon.

It cannot occur before the vernal equinox.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

By Rabbinical rules Passover Sabbath, starting at the previous sunset, can never occur on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday (so it can fall on a Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday).

Preventing Passover Sabbath from falling on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday eliminates the possibility that *Tishri* 1 could occur on a Friday, Sunday, or Wednesday.

This is because *Tishri* 1 is always 163 days after *Nisan* 15.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, was also set to begin on a full moon, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, *Tishri* (Leviticus 23:34).

Succoth had to occur in the fall after the gathering of crops (Deuteronomy 16:16).

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The rabbinic calculated calendar, the Hillel II calendar, provides us with a means for determining an approximation of the priestly calendar that functioned in Temple times. Accordingly, by calculation the Passover Sabbath in CE 30 began, as it did in CE 31 as well, on Wednesday evening making Wednesday Day, at first glance, the most probable candidate for the day of the Crucifixion.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In Jewish culture days began at sunset so that evening/night came before morning/daytime.

Sunset marked the end of a day and the beginning of a new one.

The new day came before it was dark.

The context of Luke 22:8-10 and Mark 14:13, where Jesus discussed where he would eat the Passover, shows it was still daylight but Nisan 14, a new day, had come.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The discussion apparently took place in the period between sunset and when the darkness is complete.

When it was late (Greek: *opsios*), that is, later at nightfall, or dark, Jesus and the Twelve came (Mark 14:16-17).

Nisan CE 30

In the Rabbinic Calculated Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

While not prominent in the New Testament, the sect of the Essenes made up a significant subdivision of early first-century Judaism.

The Essenes were an extremist monastic group, holding to a rigid, austere, and bizarre form of religion with Gnostic overtones, awaiting the Messiah to appear to deliver them to a new Israel.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

The Essenes, unlike the rest, followed a solar calendar, and always observed the Passover on a Tuesday night.

The Essenes fixed Nisan 14 on their calendar as the third day of the week, sunset Monday night to sunset Tuesday night or simply Tuesday as we reckon time.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

In the Essene community the Passover Sabbath, the annual Sabbath known as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, always began at sunset Tuesday night and ended at sunset Wednesday night.

The Jewish Calendars of Jesus' Day

This means of marking time differs from our Gregorian calendar wherein specific weekdays are not preset to exact dates.

In the United States, for example, Thanksgiving Day always falls on a Thursday, but it can come on different days of the month.

Passover - Nisan 15 was always a Wednesday on the Essene calendar.

The Essene Nisan

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Harmonizing the Passion Week

Understanding such calendar distinctions is important when considering which specific weekday Jesus consumed his last Passover meal with his disciples and for ascertaining the explicit weekday of his execution.

There have been many attempts to harmonize the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion into a coherent timetable.

Harmonizing the Passion Week

All have their failings, nevertheless passionate arguments exist for a Wednesday crucifixion, a Thursday crucifixion and a Friday crucifixion as well as some for other days of the week.

There have been serious obvious flaws in each argument and some biblical scholars have come to shun any attempt at harmonization of the gospel accounts of the Crucifixion week.

The Early Christian Passover

First-century Christians kept the Christian Passover, or new Passover, as an annual commemoration of the suffering and death of Jesus the Messiah (Luke 22:19–20).

Linked to the Jewish Passover, and Nisan 14, not 15, it was an annual event and not more frequent.

The Early Christian Passover

I Corinthians 11:20. In early Christianity the Last Supper was a Passover meal, but by the time of the Reformation, orthodox Greco-Roman Christianity, distancing itself from Jewish customs, had removed the paschal features of the ritual, and it became the Lord's Supper.

The Reformers, still caught in the sociocultural paradigm of sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism, brought into early Protestantism some of the customs and traditions associated with the mass.

The practice of celebrating Eucharist at anytime, however, was not that of the very early Church (CE 30-70).

The Early Christian Passover

In the Judeo-Christian thinking of the first Christians the events of the Last Supper produced a new Passover, in remembrance of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 11:24), observed annually at the end of the thirteenth day and into the evening portion of the fourteenth day of Nisan. That appears to be the unmistakable thinking of the gospel writers (Matthew 26:17-18; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:8, 22:15) and it certainly was the tradition of the ancient church.

The Early Christian Passover

Judeo-Christians, well into the fifth century, continued to observe the Christian Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, which according to Franciscan biblical archaeologist Bellarmino Bagatti, was due to "the common belief among the [Christian] Jews that the date had been fixed by the Lord and was, therefore, unchangeable.

The Early Christian Passover

Many believed that this date was superior even to the sabbath itself" (Bagatti 1971a:81).

Bagatti knew that the Sabbath remained important in Judeo-Christianity well into Nicene times.

Every indication is that from that very night early Christians continued this practice.

Indeed, according to Bellarmino Bagatti the practice was so much a part of Judeo-Christian practice that as late as the time of Constantine the Great they continued to argue that the traditional day of Nisan 14 for Christian Passover was not capable of change (Bagatti 1971a:10).

The Early Christian Passover

Beginning with Constantine the Great, the social policy of the Roman government, at least when in the charge of orthodox emperors, was the elimination of paganism and the bringing about of unity in Byzantine Christianity. Its basis was establishing a common core of fundamental orthodox beliefs which would work to further the stability of the Roman state.

The Early Christian Passover

In Bagatti's words: "In the 4th century, when Christianity had already won the victory over paganism, there was a reorganization of the church for unitarian purposes.

The Jewish usages and doctrines, unknown in great part to the Christian world, in some regions were looked upon as causes of division among the faithful and were therefore fiercely opposed.

The 1st Christian Passover

Nevertheless, three centuries earlier, at the beginning of the fourteenth day of Nisan, on the evening before his death, Jesus chose to reveal His fulfillment of the unleavened bread and wine of the ancient Passover service.

These changes were consistent with the New Covenant he brought into being.

The 1st Christian Passover

Jesus informed his disciples, on Nisan 13, two days before the feast of the Passover of the Jews (observed at the beginning of Nisan 15 after sunset), that he would be betrayed to be crucified (Matthew 26:1-2).

Jesus instructed Peter and John, early Nisan 14, just after sunset and a full 24 hours before the Passover of the Jews, to make preparations to eat the Passover Supper that very evening (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13).

The 1st Christian Passover

Surprisingly, the Twelve appeared not to be in any way shocked or taken aback that they were going to eat the Passover with Jesus at the beginning of Nisan 14, as set forth on the traditional Hebrew calendar, not at the end of Nisan 14.

The disciples seemingly had foreknowledge of Jesus' intent to keep the Passover earlier than the official declared time.

We cannot suggest that the keeping of Passover a day early was Jesus' normal practice although some say that Galileans kept the Passover a full day before the Judeans.

The 1st Christian Passover

By this means they harmonize the gospel accounts wherein Jesus kept the Passover and yet died before the Passover.

Back to back Passovers certainly do resolve this problem.

However, there is no literary or archaeological evidence to suggest that the Galileans ever kept the Passover at any other time than that established by the Levitical priests.

The 1st Christian Passover

The only extant evidence points to the Essenes as always observing the Passover on a Tuesday night thereby providing hard evidence for the occasional celebration in Jerusalem of two adjacent days of Passover.

A Tuesday night Essene Passover (the occasion of the Last Supper at the Essene guesthouse in Jerusalem) and Wednesday Crucifixion preceding a Wednesday night Jewish Passover reconciles Gospel discrepancies.

The 1st Christian Passover

The principal events of the evening, the defining elements of the new Passover included:

a set time, a full 24 hours before the traditional Jewish Passover celebration, at the beginning of Nisan 14 (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14);
a meatless Seder, the paschal meal, which the apostle Paul referred to as the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20; cf. Matthew 26:19, Mark 14:16, Luke 22:13)

The 1st Christian Passover

This had to be a meatless Seder because it occurred a full twenty-four hours before the Passover of the Jews.

There was no Passover lamb to eat for the lambs would not be killed until the afternoon of Nisan 14.

What is more the Essenes, as vegetarians, kept a meatless Passover.

The 1st Christian Passover

Hence, with the discovery of the Essene Passover we have:

**Jesus celebrating Passover,
Dying on Preparation Day, and
Buried before the Passover!**

Exactly as the Scriptures report!

And, we see how He instituted a meatless Passover, because He Himself is the Lamb.

This prefigures the centuries of meatless Jewish Passovers after the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Temple sacrifices in 70 CE.

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Mystery #2:
The Mystery of the Robe

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

John 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Mat 26:65 Then Caiaphas, the high priest, rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Caiaphas

Caiaphas (Jewish Encyclopedia)

Joseph, surnamed Caiaphas: the Jewish high priest between 18 and 37 CE, best known for his role during the trial of Jesus of Nazareth. The name *Caiaphas* is Greek and renders the Aramaean *Qayyapa* or *Qapa'*; his real name was Joseph.

Nothing is known about Caiaphas' early career, but we can assume that he was a member of a wealthy family, because he married a daughter of the high priest who is called Annas, Ananus or Chanan (6-15 CE).

Caiaphas

As high priest and chief religious authority in the land, Caiaphas had many important responsibilities, including controlling the Temple treasury, managing the Temple police and other personnel, performing religious rituals, and--central to the passion story--serving as president of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council and court that reportedly considered the case of Jesus. The high priest had another, more controversial function in first-century Jerusalem: serving as a sort of liaison between Roman authority and the Jewish population.

Caiaphas

High priests, drawn from the Sadducean aristocracy, received their appointment from Rome since the time of Herod the Great, and Rome looked to high priests to keep the Jewish populace in line.

We know from other cases (such as one incident in 66 C.E.) that Roman prefects might demand that high priests arrest and turn over Jews seen as agitators.

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, high priest from 6 to 15 C.E. and head of a family that would control the high priesthood for most of the first century.

Caiaphas

Caiaphas's motives in turning Jesus over to Pilate are a subject of speculation. Some historians suggest that he had little choice. Others argue that Caiaphas saw Jesus as a threat to the existing religious order. He might have believed that if Jesus wasn't restrained or even executed that the Romans might end their relative tolerance of Jewish institutions.

High priests, including Caiaphas, were both respected and despised by the Jewish population.

Caiaphas

As the highest religious authority, they were seen as playing a critical role in religious life and the Sanhedrin. At the same time, however, many Jews resented the close relationship that high priest maintained with Roman authorities and suspected them of taking bribes or practicing other forms of corruption. In the year 36 C.E., both Caiaphas and Pilate were dismissed from office by Syrian governor, Vitellius, according to Jewish historian Josephus.

Caiaphas

It seems likely that the cause of their dismissal was growing public unhappiness with their close cooperation.

Rome might have perceived the need for a conciliatory gesture to Jews whose sensibilities had been offended by the two leaders.

Josephus described the high priests of the family of Annas as "heartless when they sit in judgment."

Unlike other Temple priests, Caiaphas, as a high priest, lived in Jerusalem's Upper City, a wealthy section inhabited by the city's powers-that-be.

Caiaphas

The Enemy of Christ

Caiaphas was a vicious enemy of Jesus. Following the resurrection of Lazarus, as some of the Jewish leaders began to sense the impact of Christ's miracles, a council was convened. The fear was expressed that if the Lord was simply ignored the whole populous might be swept away with this mania, and that could bring the Romans down upon them (Jn. 11:47, 48).

It was Caiaphas who suggested that there was a solution—put this man to death (49-53).

Caiaphas

After the establishment of the church, Caiaphas was a persecutor of Christians (cf. Acts 4:6ff). Hendriksen was quite accurate when he described this high priest as "rude and sly manipulator, an opportunist, who did not know the meaning of fairness or justice and who was bent on having his own way 'by hook or by crook'" (163).

Caiaphas

The Prophecy

In view of the abominable character of this wretch, it is a surprise when one notes that Caiaphas, on one occasion, is said to have "Prophesied." When the suggestion was made that the influence of Jesus imperiled the nation, Caiaphas declared:

"You know nothing at all, nor do you take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." - Jn 11:49-53

Caiaphas

The inspired John adds:

"Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (Jn. 11:49-52).

Caiaphas

There are several important points here. In his own inexplicable fashion, God was able to use the mouth of a corrupt ruler to declare a divine truth.

Caiaphas meant his utterance for evil, but Jehovah so ordered the words that they expressed a magnificent truth (cf. Gen. 50:20). The statement heralded the doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus.

Caiaphas

He said that "One man should die for (*huper*) the people". The Greek preposition *huper* literally means "Over." Out of that concept grew the sense of protection or defense (Robertson, 630).

Thus, Jesus was to die "On behalf of," or "For the benefit of," others. Without him, there is no salvation. John also notes that the Lord's death would result in redemption being offered universally, i.e., to the Jewish "Nation," and to "The [potential] children of God that are scattered abroad" (Gentiles).

Caiaphas

So, why else is Caiaphas this important?

Because if we go into the New Testament, to the time when Jesus was on trial at the end of his ministry for calling himself King of the Jews and blaspheming, we find something VERY interesting.

Caiaphas was THE high priest, appointed by Rome, in the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus was brought before him, and we read the following:

Mat 26:62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

Caiaphas

Mat 26:63 *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.*

Mat 26:64 *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said [the truth]: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

Caiaphas

Mat 26:65 Then the high priest rent his clothes , saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Up until his answer above, Jesus had not opened his mouth in answer. But when Caiaphas told Jesus to give an answer "by the living God", he was invoking a law in Leviticus which states that if a man knows the truth, and is asked to tell it but keeps silence, he is guilty of what he is being accused of:

Caiaphas

Lev 5:1 And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.

This is called the oath of swearing. When Jesus is confronted with this, he knows he must answer, because not to do so would be a sin.

He gives quite an answer, one so infuriating that it **CAUSES THE HIGH PRIEST TO TEAR HIS ROBE!!!**

Caiaphas

As we read above, this was a VERY serious event: the tearing of the high priest's robe.

Jesus' answer to Caiaphas, the high priest of Jerusalem so angered Caiaphas that he tore his priestly garment.

The question Caiaphas asked was interesting to, because he was asking him directly if he was the prophesied Messiah, the Christ, and the Son of God.

Now, we must explore the answer Jesus gave, because it is *more than a simple statement of eschatology*:

Caiaphas

Mat 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

This isn't just an answer off the top of Jesus' head, but it was an Old Testament prophecy from the book of Psalms.

The high priest demanded an answer as to whether he was the Christ, and Jesus was quoting from the following prophecy of David in the Psalms:

Caiaphas

Psa 110:1 A Psalm of David. *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

When Caiaphas heard that answer, he knew that Jesus was quoting a Messianic prophecy. As the high priest, he KNEW the book of Psalms. But he also knew that in that same Psalm is another verse of the utmost importance:

Caiaphas

Psa 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

There it is! There is no doubt that when Caiaphas, the high priest, heard Jesus answer, completed the Psalm in his mind that Jesus quoted and realized it was a Messianic prophecy, that he also understood that this man standing in front of him was claiming that He was that person that would take over the priesthood.

This man, Jesus of Nazareth, was claiming to be the man who was going to fulfill that ultra-mysterious prophecy of Psalm 110:4 - the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek!

Caiaphas

Again, Caiaphas reaction to this was that he tore his robe, something that the high priest was NEVER TO DO.

Something so serious that the robe was crafted such that it would be extremely difficult to tear.

Yet Caiaphas did it.

Remember what Caiaphas had said earlier:

Joh 11:50-52 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Caiaphas

And, John 11:53 *Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

Did Caiaphas know MUCH MORE than what we may think?

Caiaphas unknowingly, "prophesied that Jesus should die", and he understood that he was going to put to death ONE man to spare the Nation. Was he beginning to see the significance of what he had said, that one man was going to die for the sins of the people?

Caiaphas

Did he understand that Jesus was the one? Did he understand that this mysterious Nazarene that was standing before him going to take over the priesthood?

Look again at the question he asked him at the trial:

Mat 26:63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

He was asking him whether he was the Messiah, whether he was the one that they were waiting for.

Caiaphas

When he heard Jesus' answer from the Messianic prophecy in the Psalms, and knew that the passage also said that he was also a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, Caiaphas knew that this man claiming to be the Messiah was very dangerous - highly knowledgeable about the Messianic office, not just some revolutionary Jew claiming to be the Messiah to garner a following.

"He immediately TORE HIS PRIESTLY GARMENT."
He was wearing the robe that was not to be torn, and based on the scriptures from Leviticus and Numbers, this meant the priesthood was taken from him, AND judgment and wrath will be coming on the people.

Caiaphas

In a matter of minutes Caiaphas, as high priest, was supposed to be inspecting the lambs that were to be killed at Passover.

But he just tore his priestly garment, eliminating himself as High Priest.

He was now disqualified from choosing the Lamb; whichever lamb he chose would be illegitimate!.

The door was open for Jesus to be the final sacrificial lamb that needed to be offered.

Caiaphas

A curious feature of Matthew's account is that he has changed Mark's words for "Robes" here.

Rather than "Chiton" (which generally refers to a tunic or undergarment), Matthew has substituted "himation" (a cloak).

Coming at such a crucial stage in the narrative, it is difficult not to suspect that there is some significance of Matthew's change of wording here.

The explanation may lie in the Greek version of Leviticus 21:10, a verse that comes among a number of rules and regulations for both priests and non-priests:

*"The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured [i.e., the high priest] and who has been consecrated to wear the vestments [ta himatia], shall not dishevel his hair, nor tear his vestments [**ta himatia**]."*

Caiaphas

Leviticus 10:6 And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD has kindled.

Caiaphas

A high priest was not to rend his garments for the following reason:

By the Levitical law, this was prohibited under sentence of death.

By the Levitical law under no circumstances, was the priest to rend his robe.

By the Levitical law on no occasion was the priest to rend his robe!

Caiaphas

It is true that it was the custom among the Jews for the garments to be rent at the death of friends.

This custom, however, the priests were not to observe. Express command had been given by Christ to Moses concerning this. (see Lev. 10:6).

There are two reasons why the high priest was not to rend his garments:

- 1) By the Levitical law, as we already have seen, it was prohibited even under sentence to death to rend the garment.
- 2) Everything worn by the priest was to be whole and without blemish.

Caiaphas

The second reason is related to the representative role of the high priest.

Everything worn by the priest was to be whole and without blemish.

By those beautiful official garments was represented the perfect character of the great antitype, The Heavenly HIGH PRIEST, Jesus Christ

Caiaphas

The fury of Caiaphas.

Jerome: The one whom fury had lifted out of his priestly throne was impelled by that same fury to tear his garments. When Caiaphas tore his robes, he demonstrated that the Jews had lost the glory of the priesthood and that the seat of the high priest was now vacant. But it is the custom of the Jews to tear their clothes when they hear any blasphemy against God. We read that Paul and Barnabas did this when they were honored and worshiped as gods. [Commentary on Matthew]

Caiaphas

Rending Garments.

Leo the great: *to emphasize his alarm over the words he had just heard, Caiaphas "Tore his garments."*

Unaware of his own madness, he deprived himself of priestly honor. Caiaphas, where does reason reside in your mind?... You are oblivious to the command you read concerning high Priests: "Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not rend your clothes." You who have forfeited your dignity, are the very object of disgrace. And in token of the end of the old regulation, the same rending that rips your priestly attire will soon also tear apart the veil of the temple.

Sermon 44.2

Caiaphas

The Seamless Garment

Another interesting parallel from the Old Testament with the New Testament transfer of the priesthood to Jesus in the order of Melchizedek is the theme of the seamless garment. As we read earlier, the garment of the high priest was a seamless one:

Exo 39:22 And he made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue.

Exo 39:23 And there was a hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of a habergeon, with a band round about the hole, that it should not rend.

Caiaphas

Now that the High Priest, Caiaphas, was unfit to choose the Paschal Lamb, who would now fill the office and do so?

Jesus, himself, remember, was given His seamless garment by the Romans who were crucifying him. How could the Romans know they were fulfilling a type and shadow of Jesus Christ becoming the high priest of a new priesthood, returning to Him His seamless robe just as the high priest wore?

Caiaphas

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

John 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Caiaphas

Psa 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

As the high priest of Jerusalem, Caiaphas, tore his seamless robe and lost the priesthood, yet Jesus Christ's seamless robe was not torn, and we see the transfer of the priesthood to Jesus Christ after the order of Melchizedek.

He is the High Priest, now, to select Himself as the Lamb for Sacrifice!

Caiaphas

The Veil Is Torn

Another element to add into the story occurs when Jesus actually died on the cross. At the moment Jesus died and his soul and spirit left his body lifeless, something happened at the temple:

Mar 15:37-38 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Caiaphas

Many overlook the significance of the veil of the temple tearing from top to bottom.

This is the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the inner court of the temple.

The veil was a curtain from floor to ceiling that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

The Veil represented the flesh of Christ, or, his humanity.

This veil was 60 feet high, 30 feet wide and 3 feet thick.

It was no ordinary feat to tear it in two.

Caiaphas

Hebrew customs tell us that the veil was actually called the "hem of God's garment".

The veil was replaced every two years, because the sun and wind would diminish it's beauty, and it was blood-stained which required it to be cleaned occasionally.

According to the Talmud, 82 virgins would weave a new veil every two years, using 72 cords and 22 threads each.

Caiaphas

That the veil is called the "hem of God's garment" is fascinating because, when Jesus died and the veil tore in two, God tore his garment at the temple, signifying the rending of the Levitical priesthood.

Yes, God tore his garment, just as Caiaphas tore his robe ending the Aaronic priesthood.

Caiaphas

God was declaring that the Levitical priesthood was forever fulfilled by the death of his Son, the perfect high priest:

Heb 7:26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Heb 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Caiaphas

The veil represented the flesh of Jesus Christ, and as his body was torn and beaten for us, so the veil was torn away.

This symbolized that, as children of God, we are **NO LONGER** separated from our Creator God and the Holy of Holies, and Jesus Christ was the forerunner into that holy place:

Caiaphas

Heb 6:19 *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*

Heb 6:20 *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. [Remember Psalm 110, that He quoted to Caiaphas]*

Heb 10:20 *By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;*

Caiaphas

You may wonder how the writers of the gospels knew that the veil of the temple was torn. During certain feast days, the door of the temple was left open and one was able to see inside the temple. When the veil was torn, the Aaronic priesthood was officially severed from existence, and a new covenant through the blood of our new high priest, Jesus Christ, was established.

Jesus The High Priest

The final words of Jesus Christ on the cross included, "It is finished":

Joh 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

If you were to study Hebrew customs, you would discover that these same words were said by the high priest when offering a sacrifice at certain feast days, including Passover.

Jesus The High Priest

The high priest would stretch out his arms and say "Naghid", which in Hebrew means "It is done".

Jesus also had his arms stretched out, and as the perfect final sacrifice, he cried "It is done". More evidence of the transfer of the priesthood to Jesus Christ.

Jesus The High Priest

Jesus was ordained High Priest after the order of Melchizedek by His Father, for He is the King of Righteousness and the Prince of Peace and our High Priest forever, always interceding for us and mediating between us and the Father.

The change in the order of the priesthood occurred at Jesus' baptism. In the Jordan He was washed with water and anointed by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the law of the initiation of priests. But He did not take up office until Caiaphas disqualified himself by tearing his clothes at the trial.

Jesus The High Priest

Now we see why the Father could not allow the soldiers to tear Jesus' robe?.

That robe was the garment of the new High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and if it had been torn then His office as High priest would have been invalidated too and the sacrifice He made for your sin would have been of no effect. If that robe had been torn His sacrifice would have been in vain and you would still be in your sin and separated from The Father.

Jesus The High Priest

Do you remember? Caiaphas asked Jesus on oath if He was the Anointed One, the Son Of God and Jesus declared to him that He was. Then Caiaphas tore his clothes and disqualified himself as high priest.

Now a new high priest would be required to offer the Passover lamb.

Jesus became the High Priest and then offered Himself as the Passover Sacrificial Lamb that would take away your sin forever.

*Heb 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did **once**, when he offered up **himself**.*

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Rom. 11:6, *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."*

Gal. 2:21, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

1 Corinthians 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'*

John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*