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## Caiaphas

Joseph Caiaphas (pronounced kay´uh-fuhs) was the son-in-law and eventual successor of the Jewish high priest Annas. He is thought to have assumed this position in 18 CE under the Roman governor Valerius Gratus and to have held it until he was deposed around 36 or 37 by Vitellius, Pontius Pilate’s successor. He would, accordingly, appear to have been the high priest at the time of the trial of Jesus (Matt. 26:3, 57; John 18:13, 24), although Luke 3:2 and Acts 4:6 suggest a more complicated scenario.

John’s Gospel ascribes to Caiaphas the judgment regarding Jesus that it would be “better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed” (11:50); the author of John’s Gospel regards this judgment as an ironic prophecy, by which the high priest (unwittingly) declares that Jesus’s death would be for the nation (and for all children of God; cf. 11:51–52).

The discovery of a first-century family tomb in the Peace Forest outside Jerusalem in 1990 yielded a dozen stone ossuaries containing the remains of sixty-three individuals. The most elaborately decorated of the ossuaries is inscribed twice with the name “Yehoseph bar Kayafa” (Aramaic for “Joseph son of Caiaphas”). It contained the bones of four children, an adult woman,

and a man of about sixty. Many scholars believe that the bones of the adult male are in fact those of the high priest Caiaphas.