

BOOK REVIEWS

CAIAPHAS: FRIEND OF ROME AND JUDGE OF JESUS? By H. K. Bond,
Louisville, Kt: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, 192 pp. \$19 paperback

Helen Bond, a lecturer in New Testament studies at the University of Edinburgh, provides a fascinating glimpse into the character of Caiaphas. Her extensive background in the history and archaeology of first-century Judea gives her expert knowledge in providing a social, cultural, and historical setting to better understand and interpret the role of Caiaphas in his world and his role in the New Testament Gospels.

The book is well researched with ample supporting documentation. The language flows, readily drawing the reader into a variety of themes and presentations. A tomb setting dramatically opens the text and entices the reader to participate in an account of the character, the High Priest Caiaphas. Numerous drawings, sketches, and pictures throughout the presentation add depth to the writing, providing a visual framework for the reader to personally identify with a specific period of ancient history.

Materials are separated in two distinct presentations; the historical Caiaphas, and Caiaphas in early Christian reflection. In developing the historical Caiaphas the author establishes the sources used for reference which include primary materials providing a plausible foundation for historical interpretation. Judean social, cultural, political, and religious life under the Roman Empire is analyzed. The life of Jews in subjugation to Roman leadership is portrayed objectively leading to the development of several possible scenarios in understanding the life of Caiaphas both as an individual and as a religious and political representative of his people. Numerous topics are covered in the development of the historical Caiaphas including his public and private life from childhood through adulthood, his duties and responsibilities as the High Priest, and his relationship with Pilate, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Neither justifying nor vilifying Caiaphas the author presents an objective scenario on the crucifixion of Christ in a chapter referencing the execution of a holy man. The historical presentation concludes with information on Caiaphas' relationship with early Christians and possible scenarios as to what transpired in Caiaphas' life when he was no longer High Priest.

Transitioning into the second half of the book the focus moves to Caiaphas

in early Christian writings specifically the Gospels. Each Gospel is discussed in context providing the reader a historical, cultural, and social framework to better understand the Gospel writer's perspective and objective. The role of Caiaphas has a distinctly unique interpretation for the evangelist writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, and John. Skillfully weaving the historical Caiaphas into the Gospel presentations the author supplies the reader with insightful material for meditation and future interpretation.

The text includes four useful appendices: significant dates from the reign of Herod of Great 37 B.C.E. through the revolt of Bar Kokhba in 132- 35 C.E.; a chronology of the High Priests of Judea; information on the priestly line of Zadok; and the possible locations of Caiaphas's palace. In addition to notes, there is a bibliography, a modern author index and a subject index.

An excellent resource for students, scholars, and those seeking to better understand the world of New Testament times, this well written text serves as a valuable reference tool. This unique study of the High Priest Caiaphas enriches the body of knowledge in regards to the Jewish world under Roman rule and adds to our understanding of the complexity of events surrounding early Christianity.

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