

# 53 High Priest’s house

## Names (also known as)

The house Annas

## Etymology

The name Annas is from the Hebrew Hananiah meaning “Yah has favoured” or “grace of Yah”.

## Location/Description

Thought to be in the Herodian Quarter at the Wohl Museum of Archaeology. This is a six-house compound, situated on the slope of the hill facing the Temple Mount. It is located at 1 Hakara'im Street, off the main Hurva Square in the Jewish Quarter. The building there called the Herodian mansion is considered to be the home of the high priest Annas.



## Scriptural references

### Old Testament

Not mentioned by name, but at this time it is thought that the high priest would have resided on the western side of the temple court area.

### New Testament

John 18:13-23; Mark 14:53; Luke 22:54-66.

Christ was brought to the home of Annas and while there was subjected to mockery and interrogation during which Peter denied his master three times.

## Famous characters

Jesus Christ  
Annas  
Caiaphas  
Peter  
John

## Brief history

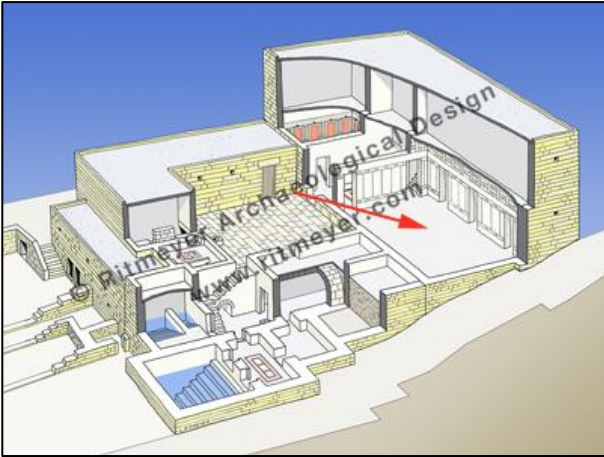
There is considerable dispute over the location and ownership of the house that Jesus was tried in. Many church historians believe that the St Peter in Gallicantu church is built on the ruins of the home of Caiaphas. There is even a statue with a crow on top in memorial of Peter’s 3 denials. There is also dispute over whose house Christ was at for his trial, whether it was the home of Caiaphas or Annas.

Recently a view has arisen that the high priest’s home in question is actually found at the Wohl Museum in what is known as the Herodian mansion. This is a 6,500 sq. foot home having 2 levels (which doubled the living space). Below are comments by Bro. Leen Ritmeyer showing firstly how it would have been possible in this house for Christ to turn and see Peter as the cock crowed the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, and secondly an article showing the place where they were was indeed the home of Annas and not Caiaphas.

## Peter’s Denial

“It must be said that the plan of this alatial mansion, with its central courtyard and lavish reception hall, makes a visualisation of the scene of Peter warming himself at an outdoor fire while Jesus is interrogated inside, eminently possible. To heat the rooms of the palatial mansion, wooden beams, that had been previously prepared and partly burnt, would have been ignited and the glowing embers placed in braziers that were put in the rooms. It is not difficult to imagine Peter standing near the burning logs to warm himself.

After Peter was identified as a follower of Jesus, he tried to leave the building (Matt. 26:71). First, he would have removed himself from the light of the fire and then edged closer to the exit. Here, at the southwest corner of the courtyard, there is a direct line of vision to the centre of the Reception Room. The arrow in the picture (below) shows the line of vision from the corner of the courtyard to the centre of the Reception Room.



This makes it possible to visualise how Jesus, if he was standing in the middle of this room, could look back to see Peter standing in this part of the courtyard (where the young lady in the photograph below is standing). This is the only scenario that allows the tragic meeting of eyes described in Luke 22:61: “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”



There is one particular place in a corner of the courtyard, from where, looking through two open doorways, one has a straight line vision to the centre of the Reception Room. It is chilling to stand at that place and imagine Jesus looking back at Peter after the cock had crowed the final time. This picture shows where Peter would have stood in the corner of the courtyard, viewed from the centre of the Reception Room.”

### Annas or Caiaphas?

“The gospels record that, after his arrest in Gethsemane, Jesus was brought to the palace of the high priest (Matt. 26:3; Mark

14:54; Luke 22:54). Which high priest? John gives more specific detail, as he knew the place better than any other disciple, for he “was known to the high priest”. John is therefore the only one who mentions that Jesus was led to Annas first (John 18:13). Although Caiaphas was the acting high priest, he was also son-in-law to Annas.

Annas was high priest from 6-15 AD and was succeeded by five of his sons and then by his son-in-law. It is interesting to note that in Luke 3:2 both Annas and Caiaphas were called high priests. It shows that Annas still had considerable influence and that he was the one who was actually calling the shots behind the scenes, through his five sons and also through his son-in-law. Why would Jesus be first led to Annas? I believe that Annas wanted to show his authority, but also that he had a grudge to settle.

When Jesus drove out the money-changers (Matt. 21:12-13), the sons of Annas were apparently among them, if not the most important ones. This money changing business normally took place in the Royal Stoa, but it would appear that, on this occasion, the market had spilled over from the Stoa beyond the *soreg* or balustrade into the holy area, and so profaned it. When Jesus in that same passage quoted God’s words through Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11, “My house shall be called a house of prayer”, he would not have referred to the Royal Stoa, but to the sacred 500 cubit square precinct (Mishnah Middot 2.1). As to Jesus’ accusation that the merchants had made it “a den of thieves”, there is abundant confirmation in the sources of the extortionate prices charged to those who bought sacrificial animals or who needed to change their money to pay the Temple tribute. Who would have had permission to do so inside the area of the *soreg*, if not the sons of the high priests exclusively. The high priestly family of Annas was very powerful and Annas used nepotism to get his sons in the most important offices of the Temple, thereby controlling the Temple treasures as well. The Talmud calls some of these priests “great hoarders of money”.

So, John tells us that Jesus was led to Annas first, but also that soon after that, the chief priests, scribes and elders of the people were assembled in the same palace (Matt. 26:3; Mark 14:53; Luke 22:66). After this interrogation, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas (John 18:24).

It is doubtful if this meeting with Annas would have taken place in the house of Caiaphas. Only the large palace of Annas would have been able to accommodate so many people and only Annas could have afforded a wealthy mansion such as the one excavated by Avigad.

Compare, for example, the tombs of Annas and Caiaphas. I believe to have correctly identified the “Monument of Annas” at the mouth of the Hinnom Valley, just below the city walls of Jerusalem, which was prime property (Ritmeyer, L. and K. “Potter’s Field or High Priest’s Tomb?” in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20.6, (1994), 22–35, 76–78). This was a splendid tomb that only a very wealthy man, such as Annas, could afford.



Picture of a menorah in the home of Annas

The tomb of Caiaphas has also been found, far away from Jerusalem, in the Peace Forest. Although the ossuary was of excellent quality and beautifully decorated (perhaps paid for by the house of Annas?), the tomb itself was a miserable affair, reflecting on the lack of wealth compared with that of Caiaphas. The house of Caiaphas has, of course, not yet been found. Even Magen Broshi who excavated a dwelling on Mt. Zion, that was initially identified as the house of Caiaphas, doesn't believe that any more.

Although the identification of the Palatial Mansion with the Palace of Annas must remain tentative, the fact that one can visualize the whole scene of Jesus standing before Annas first in that magnificent Reception Room and Peter denying the Lord, while standing in a corner of the courtyard, where he would go to in any case if he wanted to leave the palace, makes a visualization possible. Especially the fact that there is only one place where Jesus could

have seen Peter makes this event very special, as I am sure that the meeting of their eyes was a very private affair, meant to be seen by Peter only. Jesus loved Peter and would not have wanted to publicly denounce him as a traitor, knowing that he would repent afterwards.”

### Christ's Example

Walking in the footsteps of Christ in the house of Annas we are reminded of both the silence of Christ and also of his answers; Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (John 18:36-37). Do we take every advantage even in very difficult situations to speak the Gospel message or do we do as Peter did, deny our master by not letting the truth shine forth for the world to see? We need to take every opportunity presented, in season and out of season, to affirm our faith by word and by deed.

Christ suffered that long night and all the following day to give us the hope of salvation. Let us live our lives in a manifestation of our saviour and deny only this world.

### Sources:

bible-history.com  
Leen Ritmeyer  
biblewalks.com

(Compiler – Dan Leadbetter)