

Luke 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

Analysis

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests—Luke's unique dual designation reflects complex first-century politics: technically, archiereus (ἀρχιερεύς, 'high priest') was singular, held by Caiaphas (AD 18-36). However, Annas (high priest AD 6-15) retained the title and wielded enormous power as Caiaphas's father-in-law and patriarch of the high-priestly family. Five of Annas's sons also became high priests, creating a dynasty controlling the temple economy.

The word of God came unto John—The prophetic formula egeneto rhēma theou (ἐγένετο ὁρήμα θεοῦ, 'came the word of God') echoes Old Testament prophetic calls (Jeremiah 1:2, Hosea 1:1), signaling the end of 400 years of prophetic silence since Malachi. Luke alone dates this precisely (verse 1), anchoring sacred history within secular chronology. The phrase en tē erēmō (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, 'in the wilderness')—the same wilderness where Israel wandered—now becomes the launching point for new covenant ministry. John's reception of God's word bypasses corrupt temple priesthood (Annas and Caiaphas), indicating divine initiative outside institutional channels.

Historical Context

Annas was deposed by Roman prefect Valerius Gratus but remained the power behind the throne, controlling temple finances and Sanhedrin politics. His five sons and son-in-law Caiaphas created an unbroken high-priestly dynasty (AD 6-36). This priestly corruption sets the stage for John's wilderness ministry—God's word

comes not to Jerusalem's elite but to a prophet in the desert, announcing judgment on the establishment.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Why does God's word come to John in the wilderness rather than to the high priests in Jerusalem? What does this reveal about religious institutionalism?
2. How does Luke's careful historical dating (verses 1-2) strengthen confidence in the Gospel's reliability?
3. When has God bypassed expected channels or leaders to speak His word in unexpected places or through unlikely people?

Interlinear Text

ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέων Ἀννα καὶ Καϊάφα ἐγένετο ὁρῆμα θεοῦ
being the high priests Annas and Caiaphas came the word of God
G1909 G749 G452 G2532 G2533 G1096 G4487 G2316

ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν τοῦ Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ
being John G3588 G3588 of Zacharias the son in G3588
G1909 G2491 G2197 G5207 G1722

ἐρήμῳ
the wilderness
G2048

Additional Cross-References

Acts 4:6 (References John): And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

John 18:24 (Parallel theme): Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Jonah 1:1 (Word): Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Luke 1:80 (Parallel theme): And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

Isaiah 40:3 (References God): The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Matthew 26:3 (Parallel theme): Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

John 1:23 (Parallel theme): He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Matthew 11:7 (References John): And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Micah 1:1 (Word): The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 1:1 (Word): The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.