Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Illegal, Unjust Trials of Jesus, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 26:62-68
Code: 2390

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It is our sacred privilege each Lord's day when we meet together to open the Word of God. This is His very word to us. He speaks and we listen with eager hearts. The text this morning is Matthew's gospel, chapter 26. We'll be looking at verses 57 through 68. What a joy and privilege for these many years to have gone through this great presentation of Christ, the gospel of Matthew. We're coming to its climax, to its conclusion. And if ever we have been attentive, we are attentive now as we trace our Lord's steps to the cross, to the resurrection, to His ascension and His commissioning of His own for the ministry that He left behind. These are great, great truths coming to us from the Lord Himself.

Now, last time we began a look at these verses. We'll conclude that look this morning, examining the illegal, unjust trial of Jesus. You'll remember that it is Friday morning, just after midnight. Jesus has celebrated the Passover with His disciples on the Thursday evening, instituted the Lord's table, taught them some profound truth recorded in John 13 through 16, prayed to the Father for them, John 17. Then leaving the upper room with the eleven disciples, Judas is already dismissed to carry out his act of betrayal, Jesus and the eleven proceed to the Mount of Olives to a place familiar to them called the Garden of Gethsemane. They arrive at the garden somewhere around midnight and Jesus enters into long prayer sessions with the Father, three of them in which He does battle with the tempter. And out of those times of prayer, He comes strengthened and ready for the cross. Satan has thrown at Him the last flurry of temptation. He has become victorious, as always. And He sets His mind resolutely to the cross.

No time passes after the conclusion of that prayer until the garden is approached by upwards of a thousand people, Roman soldiers, temple police, Jewish leaders, Sanhedrin members, including the high priest. They have all come to arrest Jesus. There is no crime, there is no arraignment, there is no indictment, there is nothing He has done, but they want Him dead, they want Him out of the way. He is a threat to their religion. He is a threat to their positions of leadership. He is a threat to take away the hearts and minds of the people to follow after Him. He is a miracle worker. They can't compete at that level. And they are fearful. They are also energized by Satan to carry out this deed. And so, all of the redemptive history that God has laid out is coming to its climax in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Now we know, first of all, that this is a Satanic hour. Jesus said to those leaders, "It is your hour and the power of darkness." In other words, He said this is hell's moment to do its deed. When Judas left the upper room before Jesus instituted the Lord's table, John tells us, "Satan having entered into Judas, he went out and it was night." It is hell's hour and Satan is energizing Judas. No doubt, Satan and his demons are also energizing the high priest, the Sanhedrin, and all that are involved in the execution of Jesus Christ. It is a hellish effort.

And I want you to know at this point that this is new for Satan because most of the time prior to this, Satan has been trying to prevent Christ from going to the cross. Certainly in the first great wave of temptation recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, where right after Jesus was baptized He was tempted, Satan's effort there was to divert Him away from the cross. It may well have been that even in the garden as our Lord was sweating great drops of blood, agonizing in the midst of that temptation, that Satan was still trying to get Him to do whatever He had to do to divert from the cross because Satan knew that the cross would provide the ultimate sacrifice for the salvation of all the redeemed of all the ages.

And so, it seemed as though Satan's ploy was to keep Him away from the cross. But apparently by now, he is resigned to the fact that Jesus is going to the cross, that is in the inevitable plan of God. And so Satan's effort then is to cause the cross to be so strong and the death there so fatal that Christ cannot rise again. And so while at first we see Satan trying to divert Christ from the cross, we now see Satan himself amassing all of hell and earth together in terms of evil force to kill Him on the cross in such a devastating and final way that there can be no resurrection. This does demonstrate to us, by the way, both the impotence of Satan, he can't do what he wants to do and the inconsistency of Satan, he changes his plan quite frequently. He is not consistent because ultimate evil would be ultimately inconsistent. And so, sometimes it's hard for us to understand why he does what he does. But it appears now that he is energizing the betrayal, he is energizing the death of Christ in an effort to keep Him dead, to keep Him fatally wounded and unable to rise again. And even when He did rise, breaking through Satan's bands of death, you remember Satan spread lies about that He had not risen, trying to stop the message of the resurrection if not the resurrection itself.

So, behind the scene is that one of whom Jesus said, "He is a murderer from the beginning." And in John 8 He said to those leaders who wanted Him dead, "You seek to kill Me because you are of your father the devil who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning." So behind it all is Satan. So this is a Satanic moment as Jesus moves to the cross.

But let me say, secondly, it is important to understand that it is also a holy moment, it is also God at work. And here God means for the anger of Satan and the hatred of Satan and the evil of Satan to fit within His own holy redemptive purpose so that we could say it's like Genesis 50, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." And we must always keep in mind that whatever latitudes Satan has

in which to operate is always within the confines of God's will and purpose. So while we say it is the moment of Satan, we remember that Peter said on the day of Pentecost that Jesus Christ was crucified by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God. So it is a plan that has its origin, in one sense, in hell but has its genuine source in heaven.

There's a third party involved in the arrest and execution of Christ and that is evil men. Not only hell and heaven but evil men. And we find here these evil rulers who have long ago conspired to eliminate Jesus Christ, who back in John 11, just after Lazarus had been raised from the dead, few weeks before this very hour, met together and said, "This man is a doer of miracles." They never denied that. They knew He did miracles. They were undeniable. They were of proportions that no one could deny. They were of a frequency that no one could escape. And so they said He does miracles. "But if we don't kill Him, the Romans are going to come and take away our place," and they meant their temple, "and our nation."

In other words, their thought was that all the Jews would begin to follow Jesus and the Romans then as they saw the whole populace moving toward Jesus would be worried about a revolution. And they would react by coming against the Jews and they would dethrone them, take away their position, destroy their temple, wipe out their nation and it would be the end of them. And so they saw this whole movement toward Jesus.

And the crowd that had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," when He rode into the city, posed a great threat to their security because the Romans might see this as an insurrection brewing, move in to squelch the insurrection and wipe them out totally. And that's what prompted Caiaphas then to rise and say, "You don't know anything, you people, I'm telling you this, it is expedient that one man should die for this nation." And what he meant was, we better kill this man or we're going to lose our whole nation. It would be better for one man to die, rather than the whole nation. And the text of John 11:53 says he didn't know what he was saying, but what he was saying was a prophecy that Jesus would in fact die for His nation. And so, unwittingly and stupidly and out of a mouth of hatred came a prophecy of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of His people. But the Jewish leaders saw it as a threat.

Now listen then, what we're seeing here is the coming together of the plotting of hell, the coming together of the plan of God and the coming into that picture of the hatred of evil Christ-rejecting people of that time. And I want you to understand this, because it is the plan of God, in no way lessens the evil of hell's conspiracy and because it is the plan of God, in no way lessens the evil of the men who carried it off on earth. Their evil guilt is not mitigated at all. It is the plan of God but it is their will to do it. They have chosen to the compatriots of hell by their own volition. And so there's no elimination of guilt because this is God's plan, it is that god overrules their chosen evil to do His good work.

And so, we pick the scene up where they have come and taken Jesus captive in the garden of Gethsemane and they have tied Him up. And it is a very tragic scene. There is a certain recklessness about their approach. There's a certain relentlessness about it that's absolutely unbelievable. Here they come to take Jesus Christ, the King of glory, the Son of God and they come with a relentlessness that's actually staggering. What I mean by that is this, Jesus when He came out from the garden to meet them, appeared before them and at His very appearance the Bible says the whole crowd reaching nearly a thousand fell down flat on the ground...the very power of His presence knocked them to the ground as if they'd been hit by a celestial hammer. They went down with a thud. And lying there prostrate, they were exposed to the power and judgment of the Son of the living God.

Now, you would have thought that any thinking person is going to say to himself, "This is not just another man." And that they would have seen that miracle of power and judgment as a message that they ought to take a good look at who this was. But it finds absolutely no response in their hard hearts, no response in their cold heads. The terrifying power that crushed them to the ground brings about no thought of the reality of the deity of Jesus Christ or His Lordship. They run right pass that warning sign, as clear as it is.

A little later, Peter comes out and slices off the ear of Malchus the servant of the high priest. And in that scene in the garden, Jesus walks up and said, "That's enough, let's stop before we have a battle." Reaches out and creates instantaneously an ear on that man. Now there is a miracle not of power and judgment but of kindness and mercy. And they see that miracle and you would say to yourself, "Certainly the incredible creative power that gives an ear instantaneously to someone who has lost his is something to reckon with, we better stop and examine who this is." But they go right pass that signpost as well.

Now there are only two possible conclusions. One is that they knew He wasn't the Messiah. In spite of all of this, they knew He wasn't the Messiah. But do you know something? If they had thought that He wasn't the Messiah, I believe they would have done some homework to have proven it. What I believe is, they were afraid He was the Messiah and they didn't want to go through the examination because they were afraid of the conclusion. They just wanted to get Him out of the way.

You say, "You mean they didn't even want to know if He was their Messiah?" That's the only possible explanation, otherwise why wouldn't they have put on a thorough examination and found out if He was the Messiah and been happy with that? No, they were so locked into their own false religion, they were so locked in to their own self-righteousness, they were so locked in to their own style of living and worshiping and their own power and their own prestige and their own image among the people...they were so threatened by Jesus' true holiness and true purity and true power that they were afraid to find out the truth. Because if they found out that He was the Messiah, His own words had damned them. And rather than find out the truth, they wanted Him eliminated. If for any moment

they had thought that He might not be, I think they would have conducted a more thorough investigation.

And so, the scene is filled with a recklessness, with a relentlessness that pushes pass what they can see, pushes pass reality, pushes pass miracles to get rid of Him in spite of all this. And even after the resurrection of Lazarus, as I said, they said, "This man does miracles." They couldn't deny that. They just didn't want to face what that meant. What it meant was their own judgment because Jesus taught contrary to them on everything. The scene was full of violence when they took Him captive.

There was a young man there, Mark tells us in chapter 14:51 and 52, who was just looking and watching and standing by and they grabbed him and ripped his clothes off and he ran away fleeing with only his undergarment remaining. And this is one way the Scripture has of telling us of the violence of the scene. It was an agitated mob kind of situation. And here's a guy they weren't even after, we don't even know who he was, and the violence of the situation had caused him to be seized and his clothes ripped off of him. It is a reckless, relentless mob that is taking Jesus captive. And as Isaiah said, "He is a sheep who is led to the slaughter."

Well, before they take His life, they want to go through a trial and that's where we pick up the story in verse 57. And we're looking at the unjust and illegal trial of Jesus. I told you, didn't I last time, that the Jewish people had a very wonderful system of jurisprudence and justice? That their supreme court was the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council that met in Jerusalem made up of 70 leading elders, priests and so forth and then the high priest making it 71 so they would always have an odd man in the voting. And that that great group of men was the supreme court of Israel and it was their decision to deal with Jesus. And we saw, didn't we, that the supreme court of Israel was built on the premise that everyone in a trial is entitled to three things. One is a public trial, two is an opportunity for defense, and three, no conviction without the conformation of at least two or three witnesses. So the Sanhedrin guaranteed public trial, the right of defense and two or three witnesses before any conviction.

We also said that it was built into their laws that any false witness would pay the same penalty he sought for the one he witnessed against. That they could not prosecute, they could only try, so they couldn't be a kangaroo court. They built into their safeguard system also that no court could convene at night or in any other place than the Judgment Hall itself. That no courts could convene even in the late afternoon, lest justice be hurried up to get over before the day was ended...that no one could be executed the same day in which he was tried...that no trial for execution could be held on a feast day, or the day before a feast day, that there always had to be a day intervening, that all the votes had to be carefully counted, that no one could incriminate himself by giving testimony against himself which testimony could stand alone against him. All those were built-in safeguards. They violated every single one of them...every single one of them.

They, for one things, did not give Jesus a public trial. They held it privately. They did not give Him any defense. They brought no witnesses to speak on His behalf. They could not find two or more witnesses to convict Him of anything. They actually bribed false witnesses, contrary to their own system of punishing false witnesses. They were not allowed to prosecute, they did that. There was no prior prosecution. There was no arraignment. There was no indictment. There was no crime. They met in the middle of the night. They sentenced Him one day, executed Him the same day, and it was a day before a feast day...actually on a feast day. They met outside the Hall of Judgment and never bothered to count the votes. Every way you look at it, they violated their own laws.

I told you last time, this trial of Jesus has six parts. Three of them were before the Jewish tribunal, three of them were before the Romans. In the Jewish religious trial, first Jesus went to Annas, then He went to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and then a third time to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. So three phases. In the Roman secular civil trial, it was Pilate, then to Herod, then back to Pilate. All six of those sum up the whole mock trial of Jesus in which justice was violated at every turn.

Now last time we began to look at the section. I'm going to briefly mention what we looked at and we're going to go on to today's text. First came the illegal, unjust confrontation. And we departed from this text and went to John chapter 18 because the first phase was before Annas. Annas was the racketeering boss behind the priesthood. He was the guy who was really behind the scenes in charge of everything, though he had been set down as high priest by the Romans because he was getting too powerful. And Caiaphas was in his place. He still maintained the title high priest which you kept for life, and he was still the power behind the scenes. He ran all the bizarres in the temple, the buying and the selling and the money changing.

So Annas was supposed to get an indictment. He was supposed to come up with a crime. So, Jesus was swept out of the garden and taken to Annas, as John 18 tells us, to be arraigned. But that was illegal. It was at night. There was no crime, no witness, no charge, no opportunity for defense. It was not in the proper place. And Annas had no authority to do that.

Annas couldn't handle Jesus, couldn't deal with Him, couldn't cope with Him, couldn't answer His questions and he shipped Him off to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and that's where we pick it up in verse 57. "And He was taken to Caiaphas the high priest where the scribes and elders were assembled." The Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court. This is the illegal, unjust convening. This convening of the Sanhedrin was illegal. It was at night. It was in the house of the high priest, which was an illegal place. There was no crime. It met to prosecute rather than try. They came because of the bribery of a traitor. And it was the day before a feast and it was illegal, a sham trial.

And in that illegal, unjust convening we came to a third point, the illegal, unjust conspiracy. Beginning at verse 59, we find out that they can't come up with anything to accuse Jesus of, so they look for

false witnesses. They are actually going to pay people to lie about Jesus. They can't even find people to do that and successfully get it across. Finally they come across two of them, verse 61, "They say that He said He was able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days." And we know from Mark's gospel, that even those two couldn't agree on what they said Jesus said.

So now they're down to the fact that they've scoured the place to try to find somebody who could say something that He did that was wrong and no one can find anything because He didn't ever do anything wrong, He was God in human flesh. There was no crime. There was no culpability. He was absolutely impeccable. Nothing wrong had ever been done by Him, or come out of His mouth. So it's very difficult to get an accusation. So they bribe two guys to lie and the best they can come up with is that once He said that He could destroy the temple and raise it again in three days, which certainly is not an offense for which you could be executed, saying you could do something. And, of course, they misquote Him, misrepresent what He said and do not note that He was speaking of His own body and His own resurrection, not the temple in Jerusalem.

So, they're very unsuccessful and Mark says they couldn't even agree. That testimony is basically useless. And again we see the illegal nature of the thing. They bribe the false witnesses, they have sentenced Him first. It says at the end of verse 59, "They've already decided to put Him to death," now they want to find a reason to do it. That's giving the sentence before you've had the trial. And they seek death for something Jesus said? Impossible.

Well, Caiaphas is at the frustrated end of his rope. And he really has come to the point of just stepping in. And we come to the fourth point, the illegal and unjust condemnation. Notice what happens as the frustration has mounted. And they're in a big hurry, folks. They've got to get this done and get Jesus convicted and get it all over with before dawn, before the people start milling around because the people like this man Jesus. He's very popular and they're afraid of what will happen. They've got to get this thing signed, sealed and packaged and shipped, as it were, before dawn, before the crowd begins to play a part. And so they're moving as fast as they can. And they want to get it all cleaned up, you know, so they can do the Passover with unbloodied hands, if you will.

So the high priest in verse 62 arose, he comes out of his seat. And he said to Him, "Answereth Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee?" Aren't you going to say anything? Frustration has reached its maximum. You can understand that. They've just had a pile of these false witnesses coming and going and trying to concoct lies about Jesus, none of it successfully. And Jesus stands there with a gaze right into the eyes of Caiaphas that must have burned his soul...and never says a word. And all of this fury and frustration and hatred is mounting and mounting and mounting. And they're waiting for Jesus to say something they can attack to let out their passion. But He says absolutely nothing.

Finally they bring in these two disagreeing bribed liars who present this concocted thing of Jesus supposedly saying which...something which He did not say explicitly. And that doesn't come off because they don't even agree. And Jesus just stands there and says nothing, and the air is literally filled with their lies and inconsistencies and the mockery of justice dominates and they're furious because they want Jesus to say something so they can twist what He says and make that the new issue. Up to this point, all they can hear is the echo of their own stupidity and anger. And it's stifling.

But Jesus said nothing because there was nothing to say. If they weren't going to uphold Jewish law, He would. And Jewish law said that a man was not to incriminate himself. Maimonides, the Jewish medieval scholar said, "The law does not permit the death penalty as a sentence for a sinner by his own confession." And that had always been Jewish law. Jesus had nothing to say. Their law provided for Him to stand there silent. He had to be accused by others and proven guilty by others. So He said nothing. And besides that there was nothing to reply to because all there had been were disagreeing concocted supposed statements that He had supposedly made that weren't even accurate. So what was there to say? And so He stood there and let the echo of their stupid words ring through the hall of Caiaphas' house until it was absolutely infuriating them.

And he says, "Aren't You going to answer? Answer you nothing? What are they saying against You? What are these witnessing against You?" And what was the answer. Nothing...nothing. The calmness of Christ against the fury of Caiaphas is remarkable, isn't it? You see, nobody really here sees Jesus on trial when you look at the story, you see them on trial. Jesus is not on trial. It's clear who He is. They're on trial and they come up woefully lacking, as we shall see. He stands silent in majesty, looking into the eyes of Caiaphas and no doubt gazing at the other men who are around Him. No need for retaliation. No need for vindication. No need for self-defense. No need to deny anything. He stands there resolutely headed for the cross knowing this is His hour to die for the sins of the world. There's nothing for Him to defend Himself against because there's no accusation that's been made legitimately. And so He stands there silently. And verse 63 says, "Jesus held His peace." The Greek text, "Continued silent." Which means they continued haranguing Him. Caiaphas must have continued badgering Him to say something and He continued silent.

The prophet Isaiah said when He was led to His trial, "Like a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." He opened not His mouth.

And Caiaphas knew it wasn't the silence of guilt. It was the silence of innocence. It was the silence of dignity. It was the silence of majesty. It was the silence of integrity. It was the silence of trust. And that silence was deafening, paralyzing. And only the reverberation of the words of the false witnesses bounced around the room and the air was thick with yellow guilt and the condemning silence of Jesus. The breech of justice, the hatred of men's hearts, the evil of their words made the air electric. And all they could hear was the echo of their own evil words. And they longed for Jesus

to pierce that painful silence with something for which they could condemn Him...to push the guilt off themselves. They desperately wanted that silence broken by some outraged words of self-defense from Jesus so they could legitimately continue their attack. But they were rebuked by His perfect holy silence.

And then Caiaphas came to the end of his rope, jetisoned all further plans for witnessing and bringing in people to testify against Jesus. And verse 63, "The high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee," that means I call Thee to a solemn oath or vow, "by the living God." And he uses an oath that is the most sacred oath that a Jew could ever call for, that is to say You answer this question truthfully on the basis that You are vowing before the living God, that is the God who is alive and hears You, the God who is alive and punishes liars, the God who is a God of truth, I adjure You, I call You to an oath by the living God in whose presence You stand, "That You tell us whether You be the Christ, the Son of God."

And here he goes for the jugular. This is that which they want Jesus to say because to them to claim to be the Son of God is to claim to be deity. And to claim to be deity is blasphemy if you are not God. Only God has the right to that. And it blasphemous for a man to claim to be God. And so they want Jesus with His own mouth to blaspheme. And then they will have their reason for execution because in Leviticus 24:16, "If anyone blasphemes the name of God, he is to be put to death." There's no crime at all. The only crime they could come up with was that He said He was God, and that wasn't a crime because that was the truth. So mark it down for all history, Jesus was executed not for saying He was God apart from truth, but for being the God He said He was. He breaks into the scene with the last ploy and puts on Jesus the heavy oath...you can find it in Leviticus 5:1 and 1 Kings 22:16, "I adjure Thee by the living God, in the face of the God who lives and punishes those who lie, You tell us the truth. First of all, Are You the Messiah? Are You the Messiah, the promised one, the promised King?"

You know, He claimed to be the Messiah. In Luke 4:21 He read the Scripture from Isaiah in the synagogue, closed the scroll in His hands, set it down and said, "This day is this fulfilled in your ears." In other words, I am the Messiah. I am the one the Scripture speaks of. And He met with the woman of Samaria and she said, "I know that Messiah comes. And He said, I that speak unto thee am He." He claimed very overtly, very pointedly to be the anointed and promised Messiah, deliverer and Savior of Israel. That was not something that He denied. That was something He affirmed. The very fact that Caiaphas asked it indicated that they knew it was true. And when He rode into the city of Jerusalem in Matthew 21 it records, they said, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." All those were Messianic titles, Messianic epithets. Yes, it was clear that He had claimed to be the Messiah.

But He had not flaunted that. He had not verbalized that overtly and dramatically, lest He cause problems outside the proper plan of God. While He claimed to be the Messiah in no uncertain terms,

for example, in Matthew 16:20, He said to His disciples, "Tell no man that I am the Christ, or the Messiah." In other words, He avoided the danger. He avoided the threats. He avoided what might happen when the people were upset at such a claim. And so while He claimed it, He claimed it in a cautious way.

Furthermore, they knew that He had claimed that He was not only the Messiah, even though it had been somewhat in the background, He also claimed to be the Son of God. That's why Caiaphas asks Him that, "Are You the Son of God?" What did he mean by that? Did he mean just another offspring of God? Just another creature God made? No, he meant deity. Why else would they call it blasphemy? If He only meant a son of God like everybody is a child of God who loves God, or everybody is a child of God who is created by God's creative power as source, if he meant just that, there wouldn't be blasphemy in saying He was. What he meant was what Christ meant. Yes, when He said He was Son of God, He meant He was equal with God, a Father and a Son of the same essence, the same nature. And when Jesus said He was THE Son of God, He was saying He was one with God. "I and the Father are one." He says it over and over. Read the gospel of John. It is a ringing constant claim of Jesus to be the Son of God and as such, deity in human flesh, equal with God in every sense. In fact, in John 19:7, the Jews said He has to die because He made Himself the Son of God.

So, these are the things that Caiaphas knows Jesus claims, to be the Messiah, the anointed one, the coming King and Prince and ruler of Israel and as such, of course, a threat to their rule and to his high priesthood. And further, that He claims to be the Son of the living God. No one could claim that, even in a cautious way without it spreading like wildfire. And he wants to hear out of His own mouth those blasphemous claims affirmed so that he will have reason to execute Jesus. And you would know that if Jesus was put to oath by the living God, He would answer and in verse 64 He does. "Then Jesus said to him, You said it. You have said it." And Mark adds, Jesus also said, "I am," Mark 14:62. You said it, I am....I am the anointed Messiah...I am the Son of God...I swear by the living God that I am. And He takes the oath of the living God and says it is true.

This is no time to be cautious anymore. It's time to die. It's time to be overt. It's time to be up front with all of this. He claims to be Christ. He claims to be God without hesitation. And then to really drive His point home, He quotes from Daniel 7:13 and 14, one of the great and familiar Messianic prophecies, "Thou hast said, Nevertheless I say unto you," and here He quotes this prophecy from Daniel 17:13 and 14 of the Messiah, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." What an amazing claim. Yes, He says, I am God and soon you shall see Me exalted to the right hand of the power...literally THE power in the text, that's a paraphrases for God. You will see Me exalted to the right hand of God and some day coming in the clouds of heaven. And He speaks here of the fact that He is going to be exalted for a coronation and He will return to earth as judge and King to establish His eternal Kingdom. What a claim? I'm the one of whom Daniel spoke. When Daniel outlined how the Messiah would come and be exalted, how

the Messiah would be lifted to the right hand of God, how the Messiah would come in clouds of glory, He spoke of Me. And hereafter, notice this, underline it, "You shall see." You'll see it.

In other words, "Caiaphas, this isn't the last time you're going to see Me. You're going to see Me again. You're going to see Me when I come in clouds of glory as judge of all the earth. You're going to see Me at the Great White Throne when I call out of the...out of the graves all those that have lived and rejected Me and My Father and I become your eternal judge. This is not the last time. You will hereafter see that I am exalted to the right hand and I come in power and glory as the anointed King and judge. Yes, I am the anointed. Yes, I am Son of Man, Son of God." And He calls Himself here "Son of Man" because that's the phrase that is used in the prophecy of Daniel and that was His common title for Himself. He is Son of Man, Son of God, fully man, fully God.

And so He has condemned Himself in their eyes by His own words...that is unjust and illegal. They say He has incriminated Himself with such blasphemy. He has the audacity to claim to the fulfillment of Daniel 7:13 and 14, to be equal with God and elevated to God's right hand...and indeed, that is exactly right. Hebrews 1 says that Jesus Christ was the express image of God's person, the perfect representation of God. And when He had finished His work, it was exalted to the right hand of God and has taken His place at the right hand of God and will some day, Scripture says, come in great glory in the clouds of heaven, Matthew 24:30, Matthew 25, He already said it. And so, Jesus is saying, "My death will usher Me into God's presence for My coronation, I will stay at the right hand of God as King and ruler," and the right hand was the hand of power and expression. "And come again in glory." And those who now stand in judgment on Christ will some day be judged by Him. The tables will be turned.

So that unjust and illegal condemnation of Christ by His own words, causes verse 65, the illegal, unjust conclusion. The high priest tore his clothes saying, "He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses?" He jetisons that whole plan about witnesses, "Forget that, behold, now you have heard His blasphemy." Was it blasphemy? Was Jesus' claim to be God blasphemy? It either was or it wasn't. No it wasn't because what He said was true, right? It was true. But the high priest didn't want to know the truth. He didn't want to examine it. In John 10:37 to 39, Jesus said, "If My words don't convince you, look at My works...they ought to prove who I am.

They said He did miracles. They knew He rose...He raised Lazarus from the dead, there was no question about that. They knew Lazarus was dead, there was a funeral going on. And they knew he came to life. They didn't want to know the truth. They closed their minds to it for fear of it. And there are people like that today, who reject Christ not because they've examined Him and found it to be not so, but because they are afraid to examine it, because it will overturn their life and expose them for what they are. And they'd rather go to hell blind then find the truth. Incredible.

And so, he does what a high priest had a right to do, according to Leviticus 21:10, the high priest could not tear his garments for his own sorrow, but should be expected to tear his garments when God was dishonored. And so he does a little theatrics. He's not sad. He's not grieved because God's name is dishonored. He's happy because Jesus can now be executed. He's joyous, but he puts on a little play, this is theatrics. And he goes into some sort of ancient histrionics which were typical among ancient peoples who when they wanted to express grief or sorrow or distress or trouble or intense emotion, they would rip their clothes. And the Talmud even says that those judges who faced times of blasphemy have a right to rip their clothes and then sew them back up again. And it may well have been that this whole group had garments that had been sewed many times because they had gone through these kind of theatrics before. But the high priest rips his clothes, cries "Blasphemy," outwardly wanting to appear to defend the holiness of God, inwardly joyous at getting rid of Jesus Christ, whoever He may be. And says, "What further need have we of witnesses?" You heard it yourself, this is blasphemy, that's the end of the trial.

That's it. No one to testify for Jesus. No evidence of anything. No proof that He indeed was not the Son of God. That's it. Verse 66, what do you think? Let's have a verdict. "And they answered and said, He's guilty of death." And they all start shouting back, and this is not according to judicial protocol at all. Where is the scribe who is recording? Where is the one who is writing down the "yeas" and writing down the "nays" and the waiting for each to give his vote with a pause so that each one knows the seriousness of his decision? It's a rabble. It's a mad mob, screaming for His blood. No justice. None at all. No vote, mob rule. He's guilty of death, He's a blasphemer.

And by the way, Mark 14:64 says it was unanimous. They all chimed in. The usual careful vote was thrown out. No scribes to tabulate. This is mob rule. And the law of the Mishna said you had to postpone the vote for a death a day. Had to postpone the execution. No, they want Him dead fast.

In one final note, we have seen the illegal and unjust confrontation, convening, conspiracy, condemnation and the conclusion. I want to show you one more thing. And this will really tell you where their hearts were. The illegal and unjust conduct. Look how they respond. This is the supreme court of Israel. Listen, people, this is the religious aristocracy of Judaism. Verse 67, "Then they spit in His face and punched Him and others slapped Him with the palms of their hands saying, Prophesy unto us, Thou Christ. Who smote You?"

This is the Jewish aristocracy. This is the high priest and the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. This is supposedly the best of all the leaders, come together to constitute the supreme court. Unbelievable. To show you how utterly possessed they were by the demons of hell, and in Luke 22:65, it says they did many other things to blaspheme Him. Mark that. They did many other things to blaspheme Him. Listen, the blasphemer here is not Jesus. The blasphemers are all the rest of these people. Jesus claimed to be God. That's not blasphemy, that's true. Spitting in the face of God, that's blasphemy...that is blasphemy of an absolutely inconceivable type.

And it tells us also in the other gospel records that they put a cloth over His head so He couldn't see and then they slapped Him around and asked Him to say who slapped You, if You're the Messiah, tell us who slapped You. It's absolutely frightening. To the Jews, the supreme sign of contempt was to spit, Numbers 12:14, Deuteronomy 5:29. In fact, to there's a tomb in the Valley of Kidron that's known as Absalom's tomb. And, of course, the Jewish people have long hated the memory of Absalom because Absalom was the son of David who was a traitor against his own father and tried to take his own father's life. And David is beloved by the Jewish people, and rightly so. And when anybody walks by Absalom's tomb even to this day, if they're faithful to Judaistic tradition, they spit on Absalom's tomb. It is a symbol of disdain, hatred. And they spit in the face of God...the face of Jesus Christ, the beloved.

And other people buffeted, that's kolaphizo, it means to hit with your fist. They literally punched Him as if He were a punching bag. And others slapped Him with the palms of their hands and ridiculed and mocked His supposed deity by saying, "Tell us with this rag over Your head, who hit You?" And then Mark indicates to us that when the Sanhedrin was done with their little game, they got tired of it, they turned Him over to the temple police and they kept slapping Him and doing the same thing.

I want you to know the whole nation was rotten. It was nothing but a rotten carcass waiting to be eaten by the Roman eagle, and it came very soon, 70 A.D. And this is...this is a group of people who have abandoned all sense of virtue and righteousness and holiness. I mean, we understand whose face their spitting on, the face of one who smiled on large throngs of people and taught them to love their enemies...the face of one who always broke into a smile at the approach of a child...the face of one that beamed graciously when a sinner became a saint...the face of one who mirrored the loving heart of God. The blasphemy is shattering...deeply disturbing.

But you get the picture here, don't you, that this whole thing is nothing but a frame up. That you've got some religious leaders here who pretend to know God, but the truth of the matter is, when one comes to them who is God, they spit on Him. They're so far from the truth and so sanctimoniously do they desire to protect their own power and prestige and position and to keep on the masquerade of their supposed righteousness then rather than know the truth, they would spit on the one who brings it to them. And you say, "It's horrifying, it's unbelievable." And I say to you that anyone to this day right here this morning who rejects Jesus Christ stands with the spitters. I mean, that's just the way it is. Jesus said, "If you're not for Me, you're against Me."

And the irony of the situation is that those who misjudge Jesus will be judged rightly by Him some day. The tables will be turned. Here we find judges who are nothing but criminals and they are and will be justly condemned. And here we find one who is said to be a criminal who is really the innocent who becomes the judge. If you wrongly judge Jesus Christ, He won't wrongly judge you. He'll rightly judge you. Here is the damning sin, it is the sin of unbelief, it is the sin of proud impenitent

independent self-sufficient unbelief. It is the sin of standing apart from Christ and thinking you can be right with God without Him, of attempting to maintain a relationship to God of my own, of by passing the mediator.

I look at this scene and I'm overwhelmed at the grace of Christ. My deserved trial is enacted in His undeserved trial. My deserved sentence is enacted in His undeserved sentence. My deserved execution is carried out in His undeserved execution. My deserved condemnation is carried out in His undeserved condemnation. I place my faith in Jesus Christ and all this is for me. Isn't that a marvelous thing? I mean, God should spit in my face and punch me and slap me and execute me and condemn me. But Christ took my place.

I was once a captive, I was once a captive at the will of Satan, but Christ became a captive that I might be set free. I was once an outcast forsaken, a soul lost without fellowship, but Christ became forsaken and alone, forsaken by all His own that I might be made forever a member of the family of God. I was once denied compassion and denied sympathy, but Jesus went to a compassionless death and is now my sympathetic high priest and understands me and cares for me. I was once accursed from God but Jesus became accursed for me. I was once a false witness who denied the truth about Christ, but Christ endured false witnesses to make me His own and now no one can ever bring an accusation against me, even it's true, that will stand against my salvation.

I saw Jesus silent for me, shall I not fill my mouth with praise for Him? I was dead, but Jesus died that I might live. Let's bow in prayer.

So vivid in our minds, Lord, is this passage. We see the scene, it is unimaginable. And, Lord, I just ask this day that if there are any here listening to this message who stand and spit in the face of Christ, though that's not their conscious thought, but they reject Him, they misjudge Him, may they see the seriousness of that crime. And that they who make a wrong judgment about Christ, who bring a wrong verdict, who deny Him what is rightfully His, that is a claim on their eternal souls, will some day stand before Him who will be their judge, who will make a right decision in their regard on the basis of their sin and rejection. O Lord, this scene will be reenacted only everything will be reversed. We pray that all of us here will be ready to face the Savior, to be received with love, not to be cast out when He comes as judge.

While your heads are bowed in these closing moments. This is such a strong word to us. If you stand with Christ, you are protected forever by His loving grace, and He bore all of this for you. If you have not received Jesus Christ, you stand with the rejectors, however repulsive their behavior might seem to you, it is your behavior, it is rejection. It says we refuse Jesus Christ. The degree of hostility may vary, the rejection is the same, and so will the judgment be. Christ stands with open arms, He died for you, He died for the men who spit on Him, who punched Him and slapped Him. And He welcomes any sinner to receive His forgiveness.

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