

The Sinless Savior Before the Sinister Sanhedrin, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 22:63-71

Code: 42-277

Let's open our Bibles again to the final section of Luke 22. People find it hard to believe, I am reminded of this when I travel around a little bit, that we've been in the gospel of Luke for ten years. And I've said that a few times and it has a sort of stunning response to it on each occasion when I say it. And then when I follow up by saying, "I only have two chapters left and I'll finish this year," people can't understand it, but you understand it because even when we have gone as slowly as we have gone, we feel like we could go back and do it all over again and uncover things as yet unseen. The richness of Scripture is unfathomable, really, because our God is infinite. And how rich it is to go as slowly as we can go to grasp the depth of all that is here.

However, having said that, when we are dealing in the section that we're dealing in now, with the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are things that no matter how long we were to take digging into them, they would be beyond our comprehension. They are unfathomable because they are happening to an infinite person. And I find myself struggling to find the language, to find the thoughts, to find the transitions and the connections to pull it all together. I will trust the Spirit of God to convey these things to our minds through the ministry of the Spirit, enlightening our hearts beyond what words can express.

It is also, at the same time, a wondrous thing to me that Scripture is so plain and so simple that there is such a minimal of adjectives used to describe the things that are brought upon the Savior. Were we to try to convey these things, we would be tending to stack adjective upon adjective and adverb upon adverb to make every noun and every verb somehow greater and grander and larger than it is in itself. And yet Scripture in a very simple and almost understated way speaks of things which are beyond comprehension. Such are the things that are before us in the text at the end of chapter 22. Let's look at it again, verses 63 to 71. We looked at it last week, we'll look at it again this morning.

"And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, 'Prophecy. Who is the one who hit You?' And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.

Verse 66, "And when it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled both chief priests and scribes and they led Him away to their Council chamber saying, 'If You are the Christ, tell us.' But He said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you a question, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' And they all said, 'Are You the Son of God then?' And He said to them, 'Yes I am.' And they said, 'What further need do

we have of testimony, we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

We have just read again of the arrest, the mock trial and the abuse of Jesus. His arrest was illegitimate. His trial was illegal. His abuse, merciless. This is an offense to justice. This is an offense to goodness. This is an offense to kindness. This is an offense to righteousness. This is an offense to God without equal.

Satan who wanted to stop Jesus from going to the cross, can't prevent it. A torrent of vitriol, animosity, hatred, venom has now gathered momentum and viral and evil has been unleashed that even Satan cannot stop. Yet on the other hand, the death of Jesus Christ is by the design of God, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, He will be slain by evil men. He will be murdered by those who hate Him, but He will be executed, as it were, by God who loved Him as an acceptable ransom substitute for sinners to die in their place.

The crime of His captors is momentous, staggering, monumental, supreme. And there is no lessening of their guilt because God has a purpose in this. God has a purpose, frankly, in all evil...which does not make it less evil.

So we return again to the early hours of the morning on Friday of Passion Week, between one and five in the darkness of the night, mock trials are carried out in an attempt to find a reason to kill Jesus. It has been motivated by the leaders of Israel.

Turn, will you, in your Bible to John 11...turn to John 11 and let's go back to a time just after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, not many weeks before this very Friday. The effect of raising Lazarus from the dead was massive. It led directly to the triumphal entry when hundreds of thousands of people hailed Jesus as Messiah when He came into Jerusalem. The chief priests and the Pharisees who constituted the leadership of Israel, the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel, the ruling body, the guardians of both civil and religious law realized the effect that Jesus was having. And so they called a Council in John 11:47, the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, this would be the Sanhedrin, and were saying, "What are we doing? This man is performing many signs." Keep in mind, they never denied His miracles, they were undeniable. They never tried to explain them away. They never tried to minimize them. There were too many of them. There were too many witnesses. They were too obvious. They knew they had happened. They affirmed that they happened. They recognized them as signs. And they saw them not as evidences of His deity and Messiahship, but as evidences of the power with which He could take over the nation and threaten them.

So, verse 48, they are saying, "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." What's going to happen is, the whole nation is going to go after Him. He is then going to fulfill His role as a would-be Messiah and this is going to become a military effort on His part, an insurrection will begin. Rome will come in, crush the insurrection and crush us as well. We will lose our place, which is the temple. We will lose

our nation and we will anonymously be blended into the Roman Empire. It will be the end of us.

“A certain one of them...verse 49...Caiaphas who was high priest that year,” that is sarcastic. High priests were supposed to be high priests for life, but he was the sixth one in the previous twenty years, all of them relatives of Annas, the corrupt former high priest who was behind everything. This one, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish.” Look, it’s either the nation perishes under Roman domination because the people follow Jesus and that threatens Rome, or we kill Jesus. That simple.

Verse 51 gives an interesting commentary. “He didn’t say this on his own initiative, but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation. He meant that He would die physically to save the nation physically and temporally, but God allowed him to act or function as a High Priest and be a servant of the Lord, for if nothing else, that one statement which was in reality a statement that he would die not physically for the nation physically, but physically for the nation spiritually and for all who would believe in Him as a substitute sacrifice. He, of course, didn’t know what he was saying, that He would indeed die, Jesus would, not only for the nation, verse 52 says, but for all the children of God who are scattered abroad.

So they bought in to Caiaphas’ simple idea. Verse 53, “From that day on they planned together to kill Him.” By the time you come to Friday morning early, they have taken Him prisoner. Judas was the betrayer. They needed an inside person to find Him in the middle of the night because He was in the Mount of Olives in the darkness among the dense trees. Judas served them. They bribed him. He led them to Jesus where they eventually arrested Jesus.

Having arrested Him that night after midnight, they wanted to rush Him through a series of mock trials in the middle of the night. They had no crime for which to accuse Him. There was no prosecution. There was no indictment. There was no arraignment. They had nothing except they had decided to kill Him. And now they wanted to back up to find an excuse. They needed something that would sell this to the Jews who were following Him and declaring Him Messiah, as they had done on Monday when He came into the city and they shouted Hosanna to the Son of David which is a Messianic statement. The people were on His side. They were fickle but for the moment they were on His side. They had to find some way to turn the people against Him and then they had to have something that would cause the Romans to want to execute Him for the Romans had taken away the right of capital punishment from the Jews and held it for themselves. They needed the Jewish people to turn against Him. They needed the Romans to see Him as a threat to Roman power and security. And they needed to do it all in the middle of the night, not exposing their intentions or their efforts to the people until they had figured out what to do with Jesus.

And so, they take Him captive. The first place they take Him, we saw it last time, didn’t we, was to the house of Annas. The house of Annas and the house of Caiaphas was probably the same house with

a large courtyard in the middle. You remember, it was in that courtyard that Peter made his three denials and from which he eventually ran and wept bitterly over his failure that the Lord had predicted. They took Jesus to Annas, first of all. This does not follow their own jurisprudence.

Remember now, you're talking about the Supreme Court of Israel, made up of over 70 men who had the responsibility to adjudicate in every case and to bring about a just result. Men were on that Sanhedrin, as it was called, meaning gathering. They were on that court because they had proven themselves in the area of jurisprudence at lower levels. There were synagogue courts, there were town courts, there were regional courts and there was this great Supreme Court. The guarantee by the great Sanhedrin, the Council in Jerusalem was basically three-fold, public trial open to all, defense for the accused, and at least two or three true witnesses for conviction. They had built safeguards into their system that I went through last time, I won't go through them again. Just to remind you, severe penalty for false witnessing, you suffered the same penalty as the person on trial if convicted. The court itself could not act as a prosecutor. They could not indict. They could not arraign. And they could not prosecute, they had to be unbiased and only be the place where trial was held.

No meeting could occur at night, nor could one start late in the day, lest justice be hurried. If one was deemed guilty, there had to be a full day before execution took place for any other evidence to come to light. No capital crimes could be tried on the day before a feast or a feast day, and this was the Passover. No one could incriminate himself and that was always true in Jewish history, even into the Middle Ages when Maimonides, a Medieval scholar said, "In Jewish law, no person can incriminate himself." All trials were to be held with a quorum of the Sanhedrin in the official Hall of Judgment. All votes were to be carefully counted. There was an auditor that counted the plus votes, or the Aye votes, and an auditor that counted the negative votes, or the Nay votes, and they kept a careful record.

In spite of all of this and other rules, which we went over last time, Jesus' trial was a total travesty of justice in which they ignored all of this. It was a mockery of jurisprudence.

Now when you put the whole picture together of Jesus' trials, there are two trials, two categories: one before the Jews, one before the Gentiles. Before the Jews, first Annas then Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in the night. And then again Caiaphas and Sanhedrin after day break to give the illusion of legality to the Jewish populace.

This is followed by three phases of trial before the Gentiles; first Pilate, then Herod, then back to Pilate. They ramrod these six trials fast so that they can have Jesus on the cross by noon, He's dead by three, dying when all Passover lambs were being killed in the temple...in the grave before sundown so He could spend a part of three days in the grave and rise on the third. All of this is their schedule in part, but God's schedule in reality and in full.

So the trial begins at night. They arrest Him after midnight. They take Him to the house of Annas. This is recorded in John 18, we went over it last time, we won't do it again. He is brought before Annas. Annas is a former High Priest. He's not a prosecutor. This is illegal. It is night, there is no crime. There are no witnesses. There is no charge. There is no evidence. This is not the proper place and Annas has no legal authority. But Annas is shrewd and crafty and wicked and scheming. They can't get anything on Jesus with Annas and so that first phase of the trial before the Jews ends with Annas sending Jesus across the courtyard to the house of Caiaphas. Caiaphas has convened the Sanhedrin. This happens at about cockcrow when the first cock crows after Peter's denial. This would put it at about three in the morning. Jesus is taken to the house of Caiaphas. Again it is night. It is not the appropriate place. There is no crime. There is no prosecution.. There is no arraignment. There has been already the bribery of a traitor. It is the day of Passover, a feast day. It's all illegal, every bit of it.

When He goes to the house of Caiaphas, Matthew picks up the story. Let's go back to Matthew 26...(John blows his nose again)...Matthew 26. And I'm just going to look at this briefly because we covered it last time. Verse 57, Matthew 26, "Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the scribes and elders were gathered together, the Sanhedrin is convening." Verse 59, "The chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus." They knew there was no crime. They weren't looking for someone who was a true and legitimate accuser. There was no crime. So they were simply trying to obtain false testimony, which means they were trying to find unscrupulous people they could pay. They were trying to bribe people, this violation of all that we read in the Mosaic Law last week. They simply determined to kill Him. They wanted to put Him to death, they needed to craft some false accusations in the mouths of false witnesses. They couldn't find any, verse 60, even though many false witnesses came forward.

There are plenty of people who will be paid to say anything. Nothing worked. Later on two came forward and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" Well, that was way back in John 2 at the beginning of His ministry and He didn't say that. What He said was, "If you destroy this temple, in three days I'll raise it," speaking of His body. So they had no way to get an actual indictment against Him.

Still, in spite of the convoluted efforts, the High Priest expects Jesus to defend Himself in verse 62. He stands up and says to Him, "Do You make no answer? What is it these men are testifying against You?" It seems to be that he was as unclear about it as everybody else was. Jesus kept silent. There was nothing to say...nothing to say. Bribing an array of false witnesses who can't get their stories together, what answer could you possibly give to a false accusation? This is not a trial. This is a plot. There's no justice here. There are no legitimate accusations here.

And Caiaphas is getting increasingly frustrated. "Do You not answer?" he says, as if Jesus should have responded and defended Himself against two disagreeing bribed liars. Jesus did exactly what

He should have done, He said absolutely nothing. To say something would have legitimized the lies. He wouldn't stoop to that. In fact, in Luke 23:9 it says, "When He was brought before Pilate, He didn't say anything." I mean, Luke 23:9, He was brought before Herod, He didn't say anything. John 19:9, He was brought before Pilate, He didn't say anything. And Isaiah says He was like a sheep before its shearers, He opened not His mouth.

He would maintain the laws of jurisprudence, no man can incriminate himself. There is no defense against a lie. They were really destroying themselves. Let it be known for all history, they are corrupt. They are wicked. They are scheming. They are plotting to execute Jesus Christ. There is no other possible interpretation of these events. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all agree. What is it that these men are testifying against You? The answer is nothing, so Jesus says nothing. There is no need for retaliation, no need for vindication, no need for self-defense, no need for clarification. In fact, His silence is majestic, it is magnificent. Jesus kept silent...which means He continued silent which means that this is probably only one of several ways in which He was addressed and told to answer. His was not the silence of guilt, His was the silence of innocence. His was the silence of majesty. His was the silence of dignity and that silence was deafening and indicting. And that silence reverberated and careened around the house of Caiaphas and banged into the ears of those who were endeavoring to condemn Him. They desperately want the silence broken, they want something out of His mouth...some words of self-defense that can legitimize their accusations. But they are rebuked by His silence.

And the High Priest then is more direct in verse 63, said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." And now he gets to the real issue. They couldn't find a crime, they couldn't find a crime. They couldn't really have done anything to Him legally if He had said He was going to destroy the temple, though He had not said that because a man could not be condemned and punished for what he said in that society any way. But now they get to the real issue, the thing that really distresses them is that He claims to be THE Christ, the Messiah, and He claims to be the Son of God. And here's the heaviest oath put upon Him, "I adjure You by the living God." I put You on oath. This is a common way for Jews to speak, a common Jewish way of affirming that what was said was said before the one who punishes liars.

We still have some remnants of that in our own culture, when someone called into a court to witness swears before God to tell the truth. This is what they're doing, referring to the living God, the true God as the one who will punish any lie. They raise the stakes for Jesus. And Caiaphas turns the corner on whatever other issues he might have come up with because he was trying to find something that the Romans would buy into. He gives up on any real crime and turns to what it was that was obvious that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah and claimed to be the Son of God.

In Luke chapter 4 and verse 21, Jesus had read in the synagogue in Nazareth from Isaiah, the great Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 and 2, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the

blind, to set free those who were down trodden to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” Great Messianic text. “And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, sat down, the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”

And there it was. That Messianic text, He was fulfilling that day. To the woman at the well in John 4:25, she said, “I know Messiah is coming, He who is called Christ. When that one comes He will declare all things to us. Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”

And when He rode into the city on that Monday, the triumphal entry, and they said their hallelujahs and threw down palm branches and declared Him as the Son of David, the one who comes in the name of the Lord, He received that Messianic praise. Yes He did claim to be the Messiah, God’s anointed one. And also He did claim to be the Son of God. It would take us time to go through all of such claims. Suffice it to say, read the gospel of John. Throughout the gospel of John, Jesus again and again and again claims to be the Son of God.

The Jews in John 19:7 said, “We have a law and by that law He ought to die.” And this is what they said to Pilate. “Because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.” Indeed He did say He was the Son of God, the angel who announced His birth said He would be the Son of God. And He in fact made the same claim.

And so, Caiaphas gets to the issue, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of God?” And now there is something to say. “Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself, you have said it yourself.’”

Mark adds that He said, Mark 14:62, “I am...I am.” He swears by the living God to be no less than the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament, the anointed King and He swears by the living God to be the Son of God. And here for the first time in this mock trial, someone speaks the truth.

And then comes this, verse 64, “I tell you hereafter, you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

What a statement. In saying “I am,” in saying, “You have said it yourself,” came His condemnation. Self-condemnation was not admissible in a court. But this would be because they wanted Him dead and this is the one thing they hated most about Him, He claimed to be the Messiah and He claimed to be God. And He held nothing back. This is the time. There were times when He said, “Don’t tell anyone that I’m the Messiah. I don’t want to start a rabble attempt to force Me into power.” There were times like that. Matthew 16:20, “Tell no man that He is Christ.” Not anymore. Now I’ll tell them.

“I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” The world will see that. Not them in particular, although one day they will see Him in judgment. This isn’t going to be the end of His story. The last vision of Jesus Christ is not

going to be on a cross. He is the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Those are magnificent pictures drawn from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 and 14. Jesus is saying there will be a Calvary and there will be a resurrection and there will be an ascension and there will be a coronation after that at the right hand of God and some day there will be a return in judgment. Caiaphas and the rest of the Christ-rejecters then and all through human history will meet Him again and He will be their judge. Caiaphas will see Him again, all sinners who perish without salvation will see Him again. Now they judge Him, then He will judge them. Now they judge Him unjustly, then He will judge them justly. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man which is the title used of Daniel...used by Daniel of Him in Daniel 7.

And so our Lord confirms His Messiahship and His deity in the strongest terms possible. He sits at the right hand of THE power...the power, literally in the Greek, definite article, the power being God. He takes His place at the right hand of God and one day comes all glorious to judge and reign forever.

Now this is all the High Priest can stand. Verse 65, "The High Priest tore his robes saying, 'He has blasphemed. What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.'"

According to Leviticus 21:10, the High Priest couldn't tear his garments for his own sorrow. Tearing your garments was an old expression. Isaiah 37:1 speaks of it, Jeremiah 36:24, Joel 2:13, it was a way to show grief, familiar to Jewish people. The High Priest was not allowed to tear his garments for his own sorrow, Leviticus 21:10. He could only tear his garment when God was dishonored. And so that's what he does. He is not sad for God, he can't wait to kill Jesus. The Jews would have expected him to tear his garments if God was really dishonored. And they believed that Jesus was a blasphemer. And so they expect him to tear his garments and he does it but it is not over some deep, honest, legitimate sorrow for the dishonor of God. He wants Jesus dead because Jesus is a threat to his power.

By the way, he wasn't wearing his official robes anyway, so it was no great loss. The Romans kept his official robes and according to historians, they only allowed him to wear them on three great festivals. It was kind of a way to suppress them...only on three occasions could he wear them.

The Talmud said that judges could tear their clothes and sew them up again so they could tear them in the future. So some people who served in these roles had their tearing garments which they tore repeatedly and sewed back up when they were outraged or thought God was outraged.

What a strange and bizarre paradox this is. The High Priest, tearing his garments, allowed to do that only when God is blasphemed while he himself is blaspheming God. He acts as if Jesus has blasphemed by claiming to be God, claiming to be king, claiming to be the sovereign who will sit at the right hand of the throne of God and come in power as Daniel said, to set up His everlasting

Kingdom. He thinks Jesus is blaspheming, the truth is he is blaspheming, he is not protecting the honor of God.

By the way, the penalty for blasphemy, Leviticus 24:16, death. That's all he needed to hear. That's all he needed to hear. What further do we have...what the need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you've now heard the blasphemy, what do you think? They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." They...humph...they. I don't hear a vote, do you? This is mob violence. They...Mark adds, "They all." Remember I told you last week that a unanimous vote negated the verdict because a unanimous vote to convict anybody showed a lack of mercy and the likelihood of a conspiracy.

Well here it was, a merciless conspiracy indeed, unanimous. Usually a careful vote by the auditors of the yes and the no, this is ignored in the mob mentality. They are a rabble. This is the Supreme Court of Israel made up not of secularists, not of civil servants but of religious leaders. This is the spiritual leadership of Israel.

And it gets worse...it gets worse. Verse 67, "Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists and others slapped Him." The supreme sign of contempt in their culture is to spit in someone's face. Probably still true. In fact, in Numbers 12:14 a prescription of seven days of public shame is prescribed for someone who does this. And then they beat Him with their fists. The Greek verb is just that, to beat with the fist. And then they slapped...slap after slap after slap after slap. And Luke says they had blindfolded Him and their game was to ask Him, "Prophecy who is the one who hit You?" This is mockery, this is ridicule of the blessed Son of God.

Mark in his gospel tells us that after a while of spitting and slapping and hitting Jesus and playing games with Him of mockery and ridicule, the Sanhedrin grew weary...they grew weary. So they turned Him over to the underlings, the temple police, the security staff of their enterprise who hit Him in the same way and followed all the lead of their great spiritual leaders. So He was first of all abused by the leaders, and then He was abused by the temple police who followed their example. This is a rotten system, folks. Little wonder that this rotted corpse of Israel would soon be consumed by the Roman eagle.

It is at this point where Matthew says they were spitting and punching and slapping Jesus that we pick up the story in Luke. So let's finally get to Luke.

Verse 63, "And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him. And they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, 'Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?' And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming." Luke adds, "Slander," *blasphemeo*, slander...physical, verbal abuse of the most hateful kind.

But, you know, Jesus knew this was coming. Back in the eighteenth chapter of Luke, verse 31, "He pulled the Twelve aside, said to them, 'We're going to Jerusalem, all things which are accomplished

through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. He'll be delivered to the Gentiles, will be mocked, mistreated and spit on." The spit came here from the Jews, it also came later from the Gentiles.

One of the subjects that our Lord addresses many times in His ministry, and it shows up in the gospel of Luke, is the abuse of the prophets by the Jews. In chapter 4, Jesus says, "A prophet is without honor in his own country," that's been the history of Israel, they dishonored the prophets even in their own towns. In the sixth chapter of Luke and verses 22 and 23, Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men hate you, ostracize you, cast insults at you, spurn your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets."

In the eleventh chapter of Luke, again verse 47, "Woe to you, for you build the tombs of the prophets, it's your fathers who killed them." In fact, in verse 50 He says, "The blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world can be charged against this people, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the house of God." You have always killed the prophets. You have always hated the prophets. You've always abused the prophets. Thirteen:35 of Luke, 13:34 and 35, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, behold, your house is left desolate." In chapter 20 he tells a parable about a man who had a vineyard and he sent slaves back to get from the vineyard what was rightfully his and they beat the slaves and beat the slaves, and finally he sent his son...they killed the son. That is the story about how they abused the prophets and killed the Messiah.

The abuse of Jesus puts Him in the line of the prophets. The abuse of Jesus puts Him in the line of the true prophets. That's how they treated John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, as well. An apostate nation always mistreats the true prophets. Later on, chapter 23 verse 2, when they take Jesus to Pilate, this is what they say. "They began to accuse him saying, 'We found this man misleading our nation.'" What is that? He's a false prophet...He's a false prophet.

These people who held Jesus, who were self-confessed agents of God, were the abusers of the prophets as their fathers had been. And now the killers of the Son of God. And they were slandering Him, defaming Him, casting malicious words at Him. But this is more than calumny. This is blasphemy that reaches the highest level because they're doing this to God. They're doing this to God...horrendous acts. How far from God are they? And then, out of the darkness they emerge. Verse 66, "And when it was day," here comes the final phase of the three-phased Jewish trial. It's day now, "So the Council of elders of the people assembled, both the chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their Council chamber." For the first time they go to the right place to have what looks like a legal trial to touch lightly on what the expectations of the people would be. They carry on this theatrical mock trial to somehow give it the appearance of legality. They actually have filled the dark night with their travesties. But they do it in the daytime to give an appearance of justice.

And they go through the same discussion, “If You’re the Christ, tell us. He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe. If I ask a question, you will not answer.’” You’re not here for a trial, He just wants to register that. You’re not here for the truth and you’re not here to deal with evidence. Let’s just get that straight.

“But I will answer. From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” I’m going right to the throne, take My place at the right hand of the Father. He said it publicly, He held nothing back. Perhaps this is only representative of what He said. I’m sure it took longer than just the thirty-seconds to read that. But it was enough, and they all said, “Are You the Son of God then?” Let’s be specific. “And He said to them, ‘Yes, I AM.’ And they said, ‘What further need do we have of testimony? We have heard it ourselves from His mouth.’ Then the whole body...verse 1...of them arose and brought Him before Pilate.”

They had what they needed on the Jewish side. Now they were ready to face the Gentile Pilate. All this most horrible injustice ever, perpetrated by the religious leaders of Israel...judges who themselves were criminals and a seeming criminal who is himself the real judge. His majesty, His innocence, His silence is wondrous. They condemn themselves. They damn themselves.

And so will you if you wrongly judge Christ. There is no escaping that. If you wrongly judge Christ, mark it, He will rightly judge you. Unbelief, impenitence, independence, standing apart from Christ will condemn you just as it condemned them. There is no escape. All men render a verdict on Christ. They did and so do you. And it is a verdict that has massive consequences for eternity.

Hugh Martin, writing on this scene in 1875, wrote these words, “And who was it that they were leading back into the city in triumph under all the guise and treatment of a felon? Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, the captive is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person. The heir of all things. The same who was even then in the bosom of the Father as well as in the hands of the murderers, who was even then upholding all things by the word of His power. It was their Maker and their God whom these men had captured. It was their judge whom they shall see face-to-face when they rise from the dead. Yes, look again, look long and thoughtfully on this marvelous event. It is the living God, the Lord God omnipotent whom these rude men led off in fetters. Now when we have said this, do we not feel as if the subject has gone all together beyond the power of language? Yea, beyond the power of thought.”

It is amazing to see the recklessness and the relentlessness of these Christ haters. Nothing can deter them from their goal. Nothing can exterminate their hatred. And it is shown in their injustice and in their abuse. Miracles of power, miracles of judgment that should fill their hearts with fear and reverence find no responsive chord anywhere. The terrifying power that threw them all to the ground when they first came into the Garden, that very night with a force of a hammer from heaven, couldn’t convince their hard hearts of the reality of His deity and Lordship. Miracles of grace and kindness that should have filled their souls with love and gratitude find no response either. The raising of a dead

man, supernatural instant creation of life, the giving of an ear when an ear had been chopped off...nothing moved their stone hearts. They defied judgment, grace, power, kindness. They ran past every effort to stop them and make them consider who they were dealing with...and they ran right into hell. And so do all who do not consider and make the right judgment concerning Christ.

Our Father, we come at the end of this episode left somewhat awestruck and breathless, wondering how it could be that they could defy all the revelation of the Son of God. O how hard is the sinful heart. O how profoundly captious is self-righteousness. O how blinding is false religion. O how destructive is pride. We all would be there, Lord, were it not for the grace that You poured out on us, to give sight to our blind eyes, life to our dead hearts, understanding to our ignorant minds. May there be no one here who stands with those who abused the Son of God and made terribly wrong judgments. May every soul here make a right judgment and flee to Christ as Messiah, King and God, confessing Him as Lord and thus receiving the gift of salvation, the righteousness which comes through faith.

Before we close our prayer, a reminder that our prayer room is open in the front under the exit sign by the double doors to my right. We'd love to talk with you, pray with you, help you in the matter of your relationship to God and Christ. There are folks there waiting for you. If you want to know about the church, any spiritual need, baptism, any issue at all, we're here to serve you.

Father, may this glimpse of Christ penetrate our minds, penetrate our hearts, capture us. May we again remember that He did this for us...for us, to bring us to Himself. He came all the way down to suffer all of this and more, lashing nails, thorns and more, abandonment by You on the cross as a sin offering for us. This elicits our worship, our praise and our gratitude. May it also elicit our obedience. To the one who gave Himself, may we give ourselves. All for His glory, we pray. Amen.

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