

Jesus' Trial Before the Jewish Council

Matthew 26:57-75

by David Servant

Jesus' trial before the Jewish council was a sham, but it ultimately fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of His death and resurrection.

Scripture: Matthew 26:69

Topics: "Jesus Trial", "Messiah Identity"

Description

David Servant delves into the intense trial of Jesus before the Jewish council, where false witnesses were inconsistent in their testimonies, revealing a glimpse of true justice among some council members. Despite the desperate attempts to find Jesus guilty of blasphemy, the evidence presented actually confirmed His claim of deity and His prediction of death and resurrection. Jesus' silence and eventual affirmation of being the Messiah and Son of God led to His condemnation by the majority, who mocked and abused Him. Meanwhile, Peter's denial of Jesus fulfilled prophecy, showing the weakness of human resolve in the face of fear and pressure.

Transcript

It was probably very early in the morning and certainly still dark when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane. This was the plan of the Jewish leaders so that most of the people wouldn't know about what was happening to Jesus. From Gethsemane, He was taken to the home of the high priest, where the Jewish council gathered for His trial. The plan of the majority was to find Him guilty of blasphemy and have Him executed, but according to the Law of Moses, they needed the consistent testimony of at least two people. Those witnesses who agreed to lie about Jesus were found inconsistent, making their testimony invalid. This shows us that there must have been some sense of true justice among at least a few members of the council who were holding the rest accountable.

Those who were dead set against Christ were unable to find anyone who would say he'd heard Jesus directly claim to be the Messiah and Son of God. So they gathered witnesses who heard Jesus say things that could be considered claims that implied those things. Finally they found two witnesses who said they'd heard Jesus claim that He could rebuild the Temple in three days if it were destroyed. That was the best evidence they could come up with to find Him guilty of the charge of blasphemy. Was this claim not a claim of deity?

We know, of course, that it was indeed a claim of deity, and also a prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection! The Jewish council was about to help fulfill that very claim!

Jesus kept quiet during His trial, a silent testimony of the absurdity of what was happening. Finally, in desperate frustration, the high priest directly questioned Jesus in a customary manner by which Jesus was obligated to respond. Was He the Messiah and Son of God?

Jesus replied that He was, and even quoted an Old Testament messianic prophecy as being a reference to Himself. Finally they had what they wanted. He was indeed guilty of claiming to be divine, and they found Him guilty of blasphemy, just as the majority had hoped. They hated Him passionately. As if in celebration of their victory, they began mocking, hitting, slapping, and spitting on Him. They had found God guilty of claiming to be Himself!

Peter, who had followed at a distance behind the mob who arrested Jesus, then gained entrance into the courtyard of the high priest's house. He was questioned three times by bystanders about his association with Jesus. Each time Peter denied knowing Him. Close to daybreak, he denied Jesus the third time, just as a rooster crowed. Although he had declared a few hours before that he was ready to die for Jesus, his words proved to be only boasts, just as Jesus had predicted. When Peter realized what he'd done, denying his Lord, he went away, crying bitter tears. Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself.

Q. Why didn't the Jewish council, upon reaching their verdict of blasphemy, immediately execute Jesus by stoning Him, as Jewish law required?

A. The Jews were under the authority of the occupying Roman government. Although they were permitted by the Roman government to put their own people on trial and punish them, they were not permitted to execute anyone without Roman permission (see John 18:29-31). Had this not been the case, they would have stoned Jesus immediately. We know, however, that the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would die by crucifixion rather than stoning.

Q. What was it that made some of the bystanders suspicious that Peter was one of Jesus' disciples?

A. His accent revealed that he was from Galilee, the region where Jesus lived most of His life. Jesus, too, probably spoke with a Galilean accent.

Application: Jesus obviously believed that He was the Messiah and Son of God, because He was willing to die for His belief. Had He denied it at His trial, He probably would have escaped crucifixion. This destroys the foolish theory that Jesus was only playing a game, pretending to be someone He knew He wasn't. Had that been the case, Jesus would have declared an end to the game at His trial before it cost Him His life.

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