

# False Witnesses and the Death of Christ

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon highlights the fall of man, the depravity of mankind, and the danger of religious leaders who can cause the greatest injury to the work of God.*

**Duration:** 1:25:56

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:57-75

**Topics:** "False Witnesses"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by confessing their past sins and their desire to not hide or allow sin to rise up again. They then share two personal stories as examples of witnessing theft and dishonesty. The first story involves a customer observing a person stealing cameras in a shop owned by a Muslim man. The second story involves the speaker witnessing a Zulu man catching another man stealing and exposing him to the shop owner. The speaker reflects on their own past wickedness and expresses grief over their actions before becoming a Christian.

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## Transcript

Lord, we thank you that we can meet on this day where we remember your crucifixion. Lord, we ask you to open our ears, eyes, and hearts that we might understand more about the depths of your suffering. Be with us, Lord, speak by your holy word and by your holy spirit.

Amen. Our text we'll be reading in Matthew chapter 26. And we read from verse 57.

And those who had laid hold of Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard, and he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but found none.

Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last, they found two false witnesses who came forward and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose and said to him, Do you answer nothing? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus kept silent, and the high priest answered and said to him, I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus said to him, It is as you said. Nevertheless I say to you, Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy.

What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard his blasphemy. What do you think? They answered and said, He is deserving of death. Then they spat in his face and beat him, and others struck him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy to us, Christ, who is the one who struck you? We will read thus far.

Before we consider our text, just as words of introduction, the high priests had already planned to kill the Lord. The high priests and his fellow priests and the Pharisees in them, they had decided that Jesus was to be killed. The trial hadn't yet occurred.

Jesus wasn't given an opportunity of defense. They had already tried and sentenced him to death. It is extremely dangerous for you to reckon a person who is not worthy of death.

You try and judge them in your heart, and you have already decided, before you have heard all the different sides of the matter, then you belong to this crowd which killed Jesus. Actually, they were jealous. They didn't like somebody to be on a higher level than they were, and to be more popular, and so they decided, let's get rid of him.

He must be killed. No wonder Jesus had to be silent, and he spoke. He didn't speak while he was being tried, for they had already decided, and their murderous intentions were already made known.

This is an indication of the fall of man, man's depravity, a state in which God had not created them to be. Man is totally corrupt. He is not in that state that God made him to be.

He is a fallen creature. The Old Testament says, Oh, how you have fallen, Lucifer, you who walked among the burning stones, you who are a shining angel, how you have fallen. This is an indication of the fall of man, man's depravity, a state in which God had not created him to be.

He is a fallen creature. Here, in the suffering of the Lord Jesus, we behold the corruption of man, and we say, Oh, how man has fallen. Yes, great was the fall of Lucifer, even greater, though, the fall of man.

Lucifer, you who walked among the burning stones, you who are a shining angel, how you have fallen. Yes, great was the fall of man, even greater, though, the fall of man. Lucifer, the prince of angels, had fallen, but oh, when you see man, recognize that this is a fallen creature, great is his fall.

That is because man was created in the image of God, and look how he has fallen. Now when you look at this text and all that happens in this scene, you discover the utter corruption and depravity of man. And if he is not born again, see how corrupt he is.

Now here I am going to just touch upon a few themes as we go along. Maybe whatever is left out, I will return to later on. And those who had laid hold of Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest.

John describes for us who those were who led Jesus to the high priest. We find that in John 18, verse 12. Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

And they led him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was the high priest that year. The high priest and his council had predetermined to kill Jesus, but they did not know how to get it done because of the crowd. And they realized that should they arrest him in front of the crowds, there will be a mob riot.

And that crowd was huge. It was the Passover feast. Those who have studied the history of the period tell us that the Passover was a very big celebration.

Almost every male Israelite was there at the Jerusalem Passover. And they tell us that probably there were two million or so. A massive crowd.

Just think of a thronging crowd of two million. And the leader of the council and the high priest in them, they discussed together how were they to capture him if he was among the crowds because the crowds were eager to listen to him and he was popular with them. They were confused and said, well we won't get a chance to arrest him.

And then they decided, well if we are to arrest him we must do it secretly while the people don't realize what's happening. There was no way to grab hold of Jesus and arrest him in front of the mob. And their predicament was how to arrest him when he was so popular.

For some were saying he is sent of God. Some were even saying that he was the Messiah. And while they were in that predicament and in that state of confusion not knowing how to do it, Judas Iscariot came along at night and said I'm looking for the high priest.

And Judas Iscariot came along at night and said I'm looking for the high priest. Now while they were busy trying to fit together the pieces of this puzzle of how to get hold of him and to have got rid of him before the day had passed because within 24 hours the Passover was to begin and they needed to get hold of him and along came Judas Iscariot. In less than 24 hours.

They were in a hurry and yet they could see no way open. And then that night, the servant of the high priest came running saying here is a man who wants to see you. And along came Judas Iscariot and it says that they were delighted with what he had to tell them.

Satan had already entered into him. That is Judas. And he said I can help hand Jesus over to you.

I know where he is right now. If you come with me now I can present him to you. Their problem was solved.

They could have thanked God and said well you have helped us out of this problem and they were thrilled. This man was the Lord Jesus Christ. He was God.

He was the one who was innocent, totally sinless and yet they wanted to accuse him of guilt and sin. And should the Lord will these days we will still expound upon that theme. Speak about Judas and those who denied Jesus and who betrayed him.

Judas is not the only traitor to have been around. Remember also that girl who had betrayed Samson to his enemies. Remember David who was betrayed by his very own son.

There are many in the Bible who are known for being traitors. They have been around for a long time and still till today they exist. There are many and I wouldn't be surprised if there are some in our midst who are

Judas Iscariots.

And then Judas led them to Jesus and said the one whom I kiss it is he. And so they went on their way to arrest Jesus. Now there is a point that I wanted to get to but as I speak of these things so many other points come to me.

These things are so huge and are so inexpressible to try and describe. And here is Judas leading this detachment to Jesus so that they might arrest him and bind him. And he is one of the twelve disciples.

One of them. And indeed here he comes to Jesus and he kisses him. And Jesus said my friend do you betray the son of man with a kiss? Then Jesus asked that crowd, the mob with him, whom do you seek? They said we want Jesus.

And he said I am he. And they all fell over backwards. Just with his words I am he they fell over backwards.

Do you see the depravity and confusion and insanity of mankind? Who is this one that they seek to arrest? He is the creator of heaven and earth and they seek to tie him with ropes and to bind him. And even when they took the first step when he said I am he they fell over. This is the same one who spoke at the grave at the tomb of Lazarus and he just spoke and Lazarus arose.

Lazarus arose even though the grave smelt. There is no smell as bad as that of a corpse. That is why we do not keep corpses around we put them under the ground.

But that person who was already corrupted and decaying the Lord Jesus called him out of his death and he arose. Great is the Lord Jesus even if others treat him as if though he is nothing and belittle him and treat him like a dirty rag which can be cast aside. Joseph was betrayed for just 30 pieces of silver.

It is not really so much money. It is just a minor amount. And that Jesus was sold just for 30 silver pieces is a small amount.

But I still say that that price which Judas received was worth something in comparison to the little which you betray Jesus with. You betray him for nothing maybe just for the popularity the momentary acceptance and you are wanting to be honoured amongst people and you betray Jesus for far less than what Judas was paid. Some people betray the Lord Jesus even for less.

They might steal just a little bit of money far less than 30 silver pieces and by that betraying the Lord or going and picking up aids or just doing something minor and they get death. But just look at the foolishness of these people who want to arrest this Jesus who has so much authority that when he just utters the words I am he they fall over backwards. And yet he submits to their arresting of him.

This same Jesus is the one who said just a few words and the storm was calmed on the sea. So how could these people ever imagine that they could bind the one who could bind the wind and the waves. No wonder that when Jesus said I am he they fell over.

But the son of man had come for this purpose and so he allowed them to bind him and arrest him. And so since the court proceedings had closed for the day and it was night time they led him firstly to the house of Annas. He had been the high priest for many years.

Then the Romans came and deposed him and Caiaphas was then enthroned. Caiaphas was the son in law of Annas. Annas was the father in law of Caiaphas who was the high priest that year.

But they started by leading him to Annas because according to the Jewish law the high priest is one who once he is established is there for life. That's why some still reckoned Annas to be the real high priest that's why they brought Jesus to him first. And they took Jesus to the house of Annas.

After that he was then taken to the house of Caiaphas who was the high priest that year. All these things were done at night in their homes. While people were asleep.

You know how it can happen here that we might have meetings and people while they are asleep there are others who are talking and talking right into the early hours of the morning and then when they are in the service they are asleep. So they were speaking all their latest news, it was a family affair and they were getting all the tidbits of information. It's dangerous to be awake at night busy with your thing and not the things of God where you could have maybe been in prayer or have prayed Lord speak to me even as I'm asleep speak to me.

You know how it can happen here that we might have meetings and people while they are asleep there are others who are talking and talking right into the early hours of the morning and then when they are in the service they are asleep. Many of the friends of Jesus were quite unaware of what was happening to him that at that very time he was being bound and arrested and the death sentence was being passed upon him. And there was no one to defend him but let's forget those crowds for the moment.

What about us? Are we maybe busy with our things not standing up for him, not defending him, not interceding for him or maybe we even part of the very crowd that betray him and seek to judge and try and sentence him to death. The high priest and his council with their plans, their purposes, their motivations and their ideas which they are defending. Now we get to a painful part.

Jesus is to be killed. By whom? Were they the communists? Were they those who deny God's existence? Were they pagans? No. Religious people, the leaders of the churches.

A heart breaking matter that the religious leaders are the ones, the very ones who are murdering Jesus. The mind boggles. We fail to understand how it is ever possible that men of prayer, men of worship, men who preach should then want to crucify the one who is the Saviour.

But history repeatedly shows us that it is religious leaders who are the most dangerous. And cause the greatest injury to the work of God. When I thought about the revival having begun, I thought well surely everybody will be thrilled and glad as we were but it was only the pagans who were happy.

Most in the churches felt endangered and were against it. Why? For Judas was troubled by thieving. The Pharisees, because of jealousy, that is why they betrayed him.

And their lives were not complete and perfect in the Lord and such people will find themselves, as religious as they are, fighting against the Lord. In our age you will find some denominational leaders who will go against you if you say Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. They will resist you to the point that they will crucify you, they will want to get rid of you if you say Jesus is the only way for they declare always lead to God.



have to use lies to try and go against him because no fault could be found in him Paul could say I serve God with a clean conscience so if you want to arrest this person who is innocent you cannot use real sinful things or wicked things I've done you've got to use lies now look at these people they were also created in the image of God they also had consciences which they had seared

and destroyed they doesn't trouble them that they seeking false witnesses they know that it means they seeking lies but still they seek them conscience was of no assistance to them it could not prompt them to say to themselves but look this is a lie after all that we had killed their consciences if the Holy Spirit speaks to you and you do not listen to him you're killing your conscience your conscience has been blunted by disobedience and has been killed by it and then because you cannot use your conscience you seek lies to support you and now these religious leaders these high priests in them they seek lies they say come let's go and seek out those who will bear false testimony and they found them because in any council sorry in any community you'll find all manner of rubbish and of junk

and some false witnesses then did come forward they didn't know the situation they didn't know what had really happened around this man but they testified anyway but you might call them ever so evil but what about what you've done what about the things you've stolen and who has taught you was it the religious leaders know it was your great high priest Satan himself in hell what do you say about your lies remember court case when we were still children where one of the men shouted to his son in the court tell lies after all this court is a house of lies fallen is man if you tell lies you tell what is natural to man like a certain missionary who came to an area which was totally un-evangelized he was the very first missionary there he decided to tell them about the death of Jesus and he

told the story of how Jesus was arrested and how Jesus was betrayed by Judas and when he got to that part of telling the story of how Judas leading the mob came to Jesus and betrayed him with a kiss at that point of betrayal that pagan crowd cheered and they shouted their bravos that Judas had done such a cunning thing for they regarded Jesus as being the fool and Judas as being the hero and so that tribe cheered for Judas they regarded him as being the heroic one the cunning one I wonder are there any of that crowd in our midst Satan has worked in bringing man down I wonder are you part of the that crowd that is still fallen yesterday I wept I cried tears as God reminded me of something while we were at a certain shop that belonged to my father it was there in the Kingscliff area a

certain Indian man came along with his van full of you're selling bananas and things I could take you with me now to that very spot outside that shop where the motor vehicle stopped the Indian man was walking he was selling his vegetables and bananas and things with his van and he would travel to many spots only bananas he had come from the Tongat area selling bananas they say he had a sail covering his van he would then uncover his sail and reveal all the bananas that he was selling and the crowds were thronging around and demanding bananas as they were about to buy in that shop, another person came to him or her who was of the same nation and this person was working there, they were busy sweeping the floor with a box and a broom and they quickly grabbed four cameras and they slipped it

into the box while they were sweeping this customer observed what was happening while they were sweeping this customer observed what was happening while they were sweeping this customer observed what was happening a certain man was going along and said I want to buy 10 packets of this thing 8, 9, 10 and then giving him the 10 packets sneaked in an 11th one and said don't worry you just pay for the 10 and what did that person do? that man, a Zulu man said that black man then said to the owner here is a thief and he grabbed him by the sleeve and said here is this



It's seldom that what you hear from somebody else you can pass on accurately. It's usually embellished. There's something added to it.

And woe to you, you belong to hell. You're all of hell if you're that type of reporter, that type of newspaper that spreads the news and the chitchat that you get from other people. I end there.

These were the people who then were part of the plot that brought Jesus to trial and then to crucifixion. Jesus then saying on the cross, Father forgive them, they know not what they do. You need to confess that sin.

If you have lied, then come, confess that sin. Jesus then saying on the cross, Father forgive them, they know not what they do. You need to confess that sin.

If you have lied, then come, confess that sin. If you have lied, then come, confess that sin. Jesus carried those sins as he died, for he was the bearer of sins.

These sins that caused him to die. Come to him. Get your life sorted out.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, you who carried our sins, Lord we've seen today how total is the fall and the depravity of man. And how the old leaven works in people.

But we thank you Lord Jesus that nevertheless you were willing to carry the sins of these people and to carry our sins. Amen.

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