

Before the Sanhedrin

by S. Lewis Johnson

The sermon explores the trial of Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin, highlighting the contrast between Jesus and Caiaphas, the irony of the trial, and the significance of Jesus' answer to the high priest.

Duration: 50:11

Scripture: Psalm 110:1, Mark 14:53-65, John 3:19

Topics: "Sanhedrin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of the kingdom of God and how it differs from the kingdom of men. He references the book of Daniel, specifically chapters 2 and 7, to explain the four great world empires and God's ultimate plan to bring in his kingdom. The sermon then shifts to the trial of Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin, highlighting the irony and fulfillment of John 3:19. The trial is described as taking place in darkness and in a hurry, reflecting the condemnation of those who prefer darkness over light.

Transcript

Father, we turn to thee in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God, and we thank thee that in coming to thee through him we have the assurance that we have come through the divinely appointed mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And we thank thee, Lord, that we know that we have a hearing with thee and that our requests shall be answered. We pray that thou wilt give us the willingness to receive the answers, whether they be no or yes or wait.

Enable us, Lord, to be submissive to thy will. And we would now particularly ask thee for thy blessing concerning our study tonight in the Gospel of Mark. May it be a time in which we come to appreciate in a newer and deeper way the majesty of the Son of God.

And enable us, Lord, also to, as we study about him, to come to appreciate the sense of dependence upon thee in the midst of the great tensions of life. Surely no one ever has been in tension as he. And we thank thee for the beauty of his holy submission to the will of God.

Now we commit each one present to thee. We pray thy blessing upon them. And may this hour be pleasing to thee, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Tonight our subject in the series is number fourteen and is entitled Before the Sanhedrin. And we're turning to Mark chapter fourteen, verse fifty-three through verse sixty-five.

And first, a few words by way of introduction. The trial of Jesus Christ to which we now come falls into two parts. Our Lord's trial was, first of all, an ecclesiastical trial, and secondly, a civil trial.

In connection with the ecclesiastical trial, the charge against him was blasphemy. And you may remember that there are three meetings in this ecclesiastical part of his trial. The first, an informal meeting before Annas, the father of the high priest, a former high priest.

And then the second in the ecclesiastical trial was an illegal midnight one or early morning one before Caiaphas, the reigning high priest. And finally, a morning trial in order to confirm the findings of the informal and illegal meetings that had met during the night. In the civil trial, the charge against Jesus Christ was treason, not blasphemy.

And there were again three meetings in connection with our Lord's civil trial. First, he met before Pilate and with Pilate. Then secondly, Pilate sent him off to Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee.

And there he had nothing to say to Herod, remember. And so Herod sent him back to Pilate, and that was the third of the meetings of the civil trial. At the point at which we have come in our series of studies, we are at, in the midst of the ecclesiastical trial, and Jesus now appears before Caiaphas in the illegal gathering, which was, if not in the early morning, around midnight.

He has appeared informally before Annas. That event is not described for us in the Gospel of Mark. It is found, rather, in the Gospel of John in the 18th chapter.

But we are now before Caiaphas, and the Lord Jesus is to appear before him in this illegal gathering. Caiaphas is the champion of religion. What a contrast between Caiaphas and Jesus Christ.

In the one, we have the lover of religion, and in the other, the lover of the person of God. In the one, we have one who is strong in power, and standing over against him is one who is strong in submission to God. In the one, we have a man who is full of craftiness, and in the other, a man who is full of gallousness.

If Nathanael is a true son of gallousness, he is only a type of the great anti-type, Jesus Christ. One of these men is histrionic and dramatic, and at certain points in the trial, he will make appeals to the emotions of the people who are gathered about, the greatest of which is the rending of the clothes in sign of disapproval on the part of the priests. The other man is authentic, undisguised, the truly real man, and the real man of all time.

One of them is a man who is strong in the entrenched systems of religion, and after hundreds of years, the entrenched system of religion and Judaism was strong indeed. This man is the head of the entrenched religious system of his day, and over against him is the meek and gentle man with what someone has said, no haven but the wide sky of God's verity. There is not only a contrast between these two men.

There is also a tremendous irony in the trial of Jesus Christ, and as we study through these events in our Lord's Passion, and here and there dealing particularly with the atonement, I want you not to miss the irony of this situation. On the one hand, we have the deliverer, but the deliverer is in bonds. Then the Holy One, but the Holy One is condemned.

The God-man accused of blasphemy. The high priest forever, for he is high priest after the order of Melchizedek, is condemned by the high priest for a year. And the man who is called by himself and justified in that call, the resurrection and the life is handed over to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin.

There is then a tremendous irony in the appearance of Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin. We look first tonight at the circumstances of the trial, and it's the perfect fulfillment of John chapter 3 and verse 19, a text with which we are, I'm sure, all familiar, because it's one of the famous texts of the Gospel of John. And in that third chapter, in the 19th verse, John writes, and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

The work of darkness takes place in darkness, for this trial takes place at night. And furthermore, as is often the case, the work of darkness takes place in a hurry. This meeting is illegal, since the formal meetings of the council were valid only between sunrise and sunset.

But anything to gain the condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth, who has caused the leaders in Israel so much difficulty. Jost, a Jewish man and a friend of Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish Christian, called this, quote, a private murder committed by burning enemies, not the sentence of a regularly constituted Sanhedrin. It is a clear case of people who have prejudged a case and have condemned our Lord Jesus without giving him any opportunity to really stand for what he has stood for throughout his life.

Some years ago I was engaged in performing a marriage ceremony in the city of Dallas, and one of the men who was one of the groomsmen was a Jewish man in this city. He was the son of a very prominent man in the city. If I mentioned the last name, you would know about whom I'm speaking.

This young man is a very fine young man. And the groom was a very good friend of mine, and the groom told me a story about his attempt to speak to him about the claims of Jesus Christ. He was very nice in replying to my friend.

He said, I've been brought up in Judaism. I will not leave it. If I am wrong, I will just go to hell.

His mind was totally closed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I think we can say something more about the men who took the leading part in the trial of Jesus Christ. Their minds were not only closed to the testimony of the Lord Jesus, but they were vindictive in their opposition to him.

And so they have not given him a chance. In the juvenile section of a big bookstore, a small girl one day was found busying herself with a box of crayons, and the clerk uneasily asked the child what she was about. She said, I'm drawing a picture of God.

But how do you know what God is like, the clerk said. That said the little girl succinctly is why I'm drawing him. I want to find out.

She had made, she was making up her own mind about what God should be like. And too often when we come to the testimony of Jesus Christ, that is the kind of attitude that we have. We do not come seeking to learn, but we come seeking to substantiate some ideas that we have concerning him.

The Jewish people in the day of the Lord Jesus had certain ideas. Not all of them, of course, for the disciples of Jesus Christ were Jewish men who did respond. But they had certain ideas concerning the Messiah, and they were so set in their ways which were related to the fact that men are totally depraved, that under no circumstances, it seemed, would they listen to the testimony of the truth.

Now let's come to the content of the trial itself. But I should have read verses 53 and 54, so to make up for my omission, I shall read verse 53 through verse 64. And they led Jesus away to the high priest, and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes.

And Peter followed him afar off, even into the court of the high priest. And he sat with the guards, and warmed himself at the fire. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death, and found none.

For many bore false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain and bore false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither did their witness agree together.

And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? I'd like to insert something here in the Matthean account of this incident. Caiaphas does not simply ask, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? But he introduces his question with a call for Jesus to swear on oath.

He says, I adjure thee by the living God, tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. And so I'm going to make a little point, a point over that, and I want you to bear in mind that Caiaphas does introduce his question, calling Jesus to answer on oath. And Jesus said, I am.

And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, and said, What need have we of any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

Now we'll just have to concentrate on the major items of the passage that I have read, but the first subject that comes up is the matter of the false witnesses. This case was clearly prejudged. It's evident from the charges that were laid against him that they have not made an attempt to investigate them carefully to see if they were true, but they were looking for false witnesses against our Lord.

And when they could find no false witnesses, they kept on looking. Many bore false witness against him, but in the witnesses there was no agreement. Finally, some arose with some specific word against the Lord Jesus.

It evidently is related to the statement that the Lord made in John chapter 2, when in connection with the cleansing of the temple, he had said, when they had asked of him a sign, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. And so some come forward and say, he said, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. And someone in the back said, yes, he did say something like that, but he didn't say anything about three days.

And so they got into an argument over the words that our Lord said, and so even then they could not have any agreement over the charge, charges that were laid against him. And so finally Caiaphas speaks out and asks him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? It is evident that if Caiaphas had followed true legal procedure, he should never have even asked Jesus Christ this question. He should just have said, well, it's obvious that we don't have any charges against Jesus of Nazareth, because the men who come forward have given us charges that do not disagree, that do not agree with

one another.

And so there is no charge that we may legally place against this man, and I adjudge that he should be acquitted. That of course would have been the true and righteous approach to the trial of Jesus Christ. But he wants the accused to clarify the prosecution's testimony, and so he asks, What is it that these are witnessing against thee and the Lord Jesus? Because he is not required to clarify the prosecution's testimony, he says nothing.

Now it's obvious then that Caiaphas stands condemned in his own court. The second question that comes up is the matter of Messiahship. Hence here our Lord proceeds from silent obedience to speaking obedience.

There was no obligation for him to answer these conflicting charges that had been laid against him, but he recognizes a responsibility to answer this preeminent question of the head of the Jewish nation, the great high priest. And so when the high priest says, I adjure thee that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the Lord Jesus must answer, he feels, that question. Now I want to stop for a moment here, and I want you to notice carefully those words with which Caiaphas introduces his question.

He says, as Matthew puts it, I adjure thee by the living God. It is evident, if you will think about this for a moment, if you are a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, it's evident that this is a denial of the Lord Jesus Christ in the framing of the question itself. For what Caiaphas is asking him to do is to swear by the living God that his words in this case are true.

In fact, I do not think there can be a more excruciating form of Christ denial conceivable than to call upon Jesus of Nazareth to answer under oath. For after all, oaths are confessions that men don't live in the presence of God. That's why we have the president, when he is inaugurated, put his hand on the Scriptures.

He is in effect saying, I don't always tell the truth, but in this case I'm going to bind myself to the truth. Every time that you have in the witness boxes, I don't think they do this kind of thing anymore, it's kind of old-fashioned to tell the truth in courts. And so in the old days they used to bring a Bible forward, you know, and the man would put his hand on the Bible in token of the fact that this time, in contrary to his ordinary speech, he was going to tell the truth.

So every time that a man is brought before in law and urged to take an oath, it's a simple testimony to the Calvinistic doctrine of the depravity of man. Now I'm sure that the lawyers don't agree with my theology there, but if you'll just think about it for a moment, that is precisely what it is. It says men don't tell the truth.

And by a superhuman effort, I'll try to do it this time. And so you put your hand on the Bible in order to testify to it. Now you can see that when the high priest comes and says to Jesus, now I'm calling you to answer on oath, are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, he is suggesting that the words of the Lord Jesus are not always true.

And yet the scriptures have said concerning him, his own words concerning him are, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father except by me. The words that our Lord speaks, they are words of truth and they are words of life.

We have an expression, I'm sure it was invented by Englishmen, and Englishman's word is his bond. But Jesus Christ does not need any bond. He does not need any adjuring, for he always tells the truth.

And if we say to him, now Jesus tell me the truth, and answer this question, we're saying in effect he's not truthful sometimes. So if you read the scriptures you can see that in the mind of Caiaphas it is obvious he is not the Messiah, and yet he's asking him to testify to the fact that he is the Messiah. Now the Lord Jesus answers in spite of this excruciating Christ denial.

He says, I am. God swears by God in effect. All right Caiaphas, I'll answer on oath, because you don't believe that I tell the truth.

And so I say to you, you have said, I am the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. Now there was a time in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 3, when Moses had a most important experience for the children of Israel. You remember that God appeared to Moses, and he appeared to Moses in the form of the burning bush.

The burning bush was a beautiful picture of the essential character of God, his self-existence. For as Moses looked at that bush that was burning, he discovered that the bush while it was burning in flames was not being consumed. And he saw in it a symbolical picture of the appearance of God.

It was a theophany, and God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. It was in, it was analogous to the later days when Israel would be led out of Egypt by the pillar of cloud in the daytime and by the pillar of fire at night. That fire in the bush that burned not was designed to typify the self-existence of God.

And God called Moses to be the deliverer of the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. And then Moses, his faith wavering a little bit, said to this person who was speaking to him, the angel of Jehovah, who is also called the Lord in the passage, what's your name? What am I going to say to Israel when I go back? When they say, whose name is he who is calling us through you? And you'll remember that God answered Moses by the sight of the burning bush, I am who I am. In effect saying there is no possible way for me, Moses, to define myself.

I cannot define myself by any standards aside from myself, for if I did I should relate myself to something that is corruptible. I am the eternal self-existent God. I can only say I am who I am.

And shortly after that the exodus begins. It is as if all of heaven and all of earth is at the behest of the one who says I am who I am and great miracles transpire. There are miracles that Moses performs and there is the miracle of the Red Sea and there is the miracle of the deliverance of the children of Israel as they pass out from Egypt into the promised land.

Now when the Lord Jesus stood in the gathering of the Sanhedrin, that event and that experience in which he confessed his name before those unbelieving leaders, that event was more significant than the event in which God appeared to Moses and gave him his name. Now I'm sure that if you had had a thermometer and you had been able to test the spiritual temperature of the room in which the Sanhedrin and Jesus were gathered, and if you were able to really test the fires that raged there when the Son of God, the eternal Son said I am the Christ, the Son of the living God, the thermometers would burst because the temperature, the spiritual temperature was unbearably hot. And shortly after the miracles take place and the greatest of all the exoduses begins because the Lord Jesus accomplishes the act of redemption on the cross at Calvary by which men who are in spiritual bondage are let out into the freedom of eternal life.

So when Jesus before the great high priest said I am the Christ, the Son of the blessed, that was one of the great points in the history of the testimony of the Lord Jesus. But he did not simply stop by saying that

he was the Christ, the Son of the blessed. I should have commented upon this too, that when the Lord Jesus confesses in these last hours of his earthly existence in the flesh, apart from his resurrected flesh, when he confesses that he is the Christ, the Son of the blessed, it is the last and the perfect fulfillment of his office as prophet.

You remember that in the epistle of the Hebrews, the text of that epistle begins with God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. This is the climax of the prophetic ministry of the Lord Jesus when he speaks to us and affirms under oath that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now I say he doesn't stop with that.

He then puts together two passages of scripture which any thinking Christian ought to make a great deal of. Now I entitled this course when we began it, remember, The Suffering Servant of Jehovah, the Old Testament, and the Doctrine of the Atonement. Now we want to notice in the answer that Jesus gives to the high priest that he refers to two passages from the Old Testament which expound the significance of the words that he adds.

In the 62nd verse we read, and Jesus said, I am and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power. Now to what text does he refer? Well he refers to Psalm 110 and verse 1. Now why don't you take your Bibles, if you have your Bibles with you, and if you don't, well your face should be red with shame. Turn to Psalm 110 and verse 1. Now since I saw one wife turn to her husband at that moment, one Bible for husband and wife will qualify and you may escape shame tonight.

Psalm 110 verse 1 says, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Jesus has said ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power. Psalm 110 is one of the great Messianic Psalms, as you well know.

It is the Psalm of the Messianic King who is going to overthrow the powers that are arranged against Jehovah and establish his kingdom upon the earth. It is also the great Psalm of the Messianic High Priest, who is the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. But the point that our Lord is dealing with is the point of the sitting on the right hand of power.

And so when he answers Caiaphas and says, I am the Messiah and you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, he is making the claim that not only is he the Messiah, but no matter what they may do to him, they are going to see that he is to come out of the trials and persecutions and death and crucifixion. He is going to come out triumphant and he is going to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high. In other words, he is going to be vindicated in the events that follow.

That is why, by the way, that the Apostles during the Book of Acts and that period preached so often the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It was not that the resurrection was the foundation of the atonement. The foundation of atonement, as we shall see, was his death.

But in the preaching of the resurrection, they were saying specifically to the nation Israel, what you did when you crucified the Messiah is contrary to the will of God and the proof of it is that God has raised him from the dead. And in raising him from the dead, God himself has said to you, you are wrong in having put him to death and you need to repent of what you have done. Now, that is not all.

Psalms 110, 1 is part of our Lord's answer. He is a master of the Scriptures and you see he answers in the words of Scripture. But he also says, you shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.

So you shall see the Son of Man vindicated. He will be sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, but you will also see him coming in the clouds of heaven. Now, do you remember the passage from which that text is taken? If you are good students of the Bible, you would know immediately that that is found in the book of Daniel.

And if you don't know where it's found, well then deep down within your heart you should say, I don't know the Bible as well as I ought to know it. That's why you are here on Monday nights, of course, as well as in the other meetings of the assembly. Daniel chapter 7. So turn with me there and just to give you a little hint, it's on page 908 in my edition of the King James Version.

Daniel chapter 7. Now remember in Daniel chapter 2, Daniel interpreted the great vision of Nebuchadnezzar in which he saw that magnificent image of man in four metals designed to represent the four great world empires which would pass on the pages of history. And then finally remember Daniel was given a picture in interpretation of a stone cut out without hands that was going to smite the image on its feet. And the image would be destroyed and the stone would expand and become a mountain which would fill the whole earth.

Now that was designed to stress the fact that there are going to be four great world empires on the earth, but God ultimately is going to bring in his kingdom. That's why it's called the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of men. Isn't it interesting in the Bible we read of the kingdom of God and in the pulpits of our churches across the country we speak of how we are going to bring in the kingdom.

And yet it's the kingdom of God. Now in the seventh chapter, in the second chapter when Daniel gives us the picture of the great magnificent image, well we look at the kingdoms of the earth as we see them. And so we see them as a great magnificent thing.

Just think of the kingdoms of the world. The kingdoms of Greece, the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of Rome, the kingdom of the United States. How great we are.

And so we picture it under the form of a great image. But God has another way of looking at things from his own viewpoint. And in the seventh chapter, of course, Daniel is given a view of the same thing that he had in the second chapter, but this time under the form of wild beasts.

And this is the way that God looks at men's kingdoms. For they are kingdoms of men who are, according to the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity, totally depraved. And in the seventh chapter, Daniel describes for us these four beasts which represent the same four great world empires of Babylon, the Lion, Medo-Persia, the Bear, Greece, and Rome.

And Greece, the he-goat or the leopard, and then Rome, this beast that one cannot describe. Indescribable. And then we read in verse 13, after having seen the vision of the thrones, in verse 13 we read, I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man.

Notice the term, Son of Man. For Jesus had said, ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power. And here he says, one like unto the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. So when the Lord Jesus said to Caiaphas the high priest, that you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, he was saying, I am going to pass through the experience of the next hours, and I am going to ascend to the right hand of the throne of God, and God himself is going to vindicate me and establish me in the place of authority at his right hand.

But furthermore, Caiaphas, the time is coming when you are going to see the Son of Man get up off of the seat by the side of the Father in heaven, and he is going to come back to this earth, having received from the Father a kingdom, and he is going to rule and reign upon the earth, and he is going to have universal authority, and ultimately you and all you stand for are going to be under his authority. This is a magnificent claim that the Lord Jesus is making, for he says that he is not only the Messiah, but he is the Messiah of Psalm 110, and the Messiah of Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. So the stone shall come and smash the image on its feet, and shall fill the earth.

And this is amazing, because you see the Lord Jesus is in one of the deep, deepest of the depths of the trials that face him as the Son of Man on the earth, and he sings a song in his soul, and the song is the fugue of the Son of Man, that his day is coming in spite of what men are doing to him at the present time. I would take it that this is an inkling of the kind of attitude that you and I should have when the trials of life come to us. Our trials are not like the trials of Jesus Christ.

We have not yet resisted unto death, but the attitude that the Lord Jesus had was, this is simply a moment in the ongoing program of God. This is your day, Caiaphas. Make the most of it, for it's all that you're going to have.

The time is coming when I shall have my day, and it shall be the day of ultimate and eternal authority. And my dear Christian friends, when you pass through trials, and when you pass through difficulties, and when things seem to be at their blackest, we should ever remember that our day is coming too. And we shall come, and we shall rule and reign with him, and we shall enjoy his presence throughout eternity.

And these great trials which seem so vast and overpowering to us at the moment, and seem so long as we pass through them, are just moments in the plan and program of God. Now, we come to the matter of judgment. I don't think of all the characters in the Bible, I don't think there is anyone that I would less like to be than the high priest, Caiaphas.

If it's not Judas, it's Caiaphas. Neither one of these men would I want to be. Now then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, what further need have we of witnesses, ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

The Sanhedrin attempts to divest itself of responsibility by pleading that he is the enemy of God's truth. That's what it means to rend one's clothes. To rend one's clothes is to signify in an open way that you disagree with what is going on, and furthermore, this specific thing of rending of clothes was designed to be done when someone had committed blasphemy.

And so the high priest accuses the Lord Jesus of blasphemy. He says he's the enemy of God's truth. Now notice that Caiaphas has changed horses in the midst of the stream.

Formerly he said that the relationship of Jesus Christ to Rome demanded his death, but now his relationship to God demands his death. But don't think that the high priest is entered into this with any great amount of feeling. When we read of the rending of the clothes, this was a kind of formal act in Judaism which high priests were engaged in constantly.

It's something like the putting on of the black cap in some of the countries of the earth when the judge is going to pronounce the verdict. It was a formal act. And furthermore, the rent in the clothes had come to be a rent of a certain specified length, and in addition, it was only in certain parts of the garments, those most easily sewn back together again, that the high priest performed his rending.

So you must not think of him as being under great emotional stress when he did this. He was just going through the formality of condemning the Lord Jesus. I once read a story of a chorus girl who introduced her sweetheart to another chorus girl and was angered when he transferred his affections to the second from the first.

And her anger was not directed at the man, but at her rival. And when she exploded in an angry, vituperative letter, she did not forget the proprietors. Caiaphas did not forget the proprietors.

The little girl wrote to the other girl and she said, look here, you little cat, you know blamed well we've been going together for months. Wait till I lay my hands on you, you good-for-nothing bleached blonde. I'll scratch your eyes out, pull your hair out, your teeth, and throw acid on you.

Yours truly. She signed her name and then she put P.S. Please excuse the pencil. Caiaphas, by rending his clothes, says in effect, alas, alas to think that Abraham should have given birth to such a son.

But while he rends his clothes, the man of sorrows is rending his heart for sinners. And God will soon rend the veil and eternally dismiss the Sanhedrin. Now the consequences of the trial are given to us in the last verse, verse 65.

And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to buffet him and to say unto him, prophesy. And one of the other texts says, prophesy unto us, tell us who has smitten you. And the guards or the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

And notice that even the servants helped to cast reproach on the servant of Jehovah. It was a trial in which there was an exhibition of contempt, of sadism, and of demonism. If serious, they should have closed the session in solemnity.

You know it's the delight of abject servitude in insulting one whom they could not overcome, nor would dare to attack. It's an exhibition of the innate vulgarity of the mob which loves to fall, trample on fallen greatness. It's again a testimony to the great Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity of man.

For they love to do this. It was exhibited in the way in which the Italians responded to Mussolini. When they finally had him in his power, they did everything that they possibly could to degrade that poor man.

And that is what we see in the servants who act toward the servant of Jehovah by spitting upon him, by buffeting him, by striking him, and then shouting out, prophesy unto us who it is that struck you. The prophet is asked to become a magician or a fortune teller, a Houdini or a Gene Dixon. They have him blindfolded and so they smite him and say, now tell us who has smitten you.

If he had answered, they would not have understood, because he probably would have answered, it is not you who are smiting me, it is God who is really smiting me, for it has pleased the Father to bruise me in these trials. Ironically, and this I think is always what you find in the Scripture, ironically, while all of this was going on, if you had been able to hear beyond that immediate room, you might have heard a cock crow in the distance. And then you might have heard a second cock crow in the distance.

And while they were shouting, prophesy unto us, prophesy unto us, one of the greatest of the prophecies of the New Testament was being fulfilled right in their ears. For Jesus had said in verse 30 of John 14 to Peter, this day even in this night before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And while this trial was going on, that prophecy was being fulfilled, and I think it is most likely that they did hear that cock crow, but since their ears were deaf to spiritual things, they did not understand what was really transpiring.

That's the irony of the man who does not understand spiritual things. The Bible says, he that is of God hears God's voice. Now that's a terrible text of Scripture.

He that is of God hears God's voice. Those who are not of God do not hear his voice. What does that mean? Well, that means that there are some who are good ground, and they respond.

And there are a great number who are not good ground, and they do not respond. Their minds are blinded. Their ears are deaf.

Their hearts are rebellious. Their emotions are corrupt. And it's a great illustration of that doctrine that I've been telling you about tonight.

Now a few words by way of conclusion. First, a rather startling observation. Caiaphas in a sense was right.

Jesus was guilty of death. He was to become sin. And in that sense, it was right that he should be condemned to death.

He is worthy of condemnation when he takes to himself the sin of sinners. Both God and Caiaphas utter the same prophecies, the same words. Caiaphas had already said, one must die for all.

And God too says, one must die for all. But for Caiaphas, what he meant by it is something entirely different than that which it meant for God. For Caiaphas, when he said, as he said in John 11, one must die for all, he meant this Jewish man must die under the judgment in order that the rest of us Jews may not be involved with the Romans in judgment from them.

So one must die. It is expedient for us that one man should die for the benefit of the nation as a whole. But when God says it is expedient that one man should die for all, he means in the sense of one should stand under the judgment of God as the penal satisfaction making it possible for sinners to be saved.

So Caiaphas speaks for man and for God. According to the one he blasphemed. According to the other he assumed the blasphemy of others.

According to the one Israel is rescued by his sacrifice. According to the other, by his sacrifice their guilt is assumed. According to both, he is guilty of death.

As one of the commentators has put it, men say, aha, that good for nothing. They are wrong. God says, aha, that worthless one and he's right.

For Christ stands in our stead. He who knew no worthlessness, him hath God made worthlessness for us. And so the glorious paradox of the suffering Savior and servant of Jehovah was not the hymn composer right in writing, see from his head, his hands, his feet.

Sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e'er such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown? Another final thing, a solemn word of application. It is obvious when we think of a trial such as Jesus Christ's trial here that we should think of ourselves as we stand before him.

For the Sanhedrin it was Caiaphas and his testimony, his aims, his intentions, or Jesus Christ. And for us in 1974 it is again Caiaphas or Christ. He's either the Messiah or a blasphemer.

There is no halfway house. History and heart decide for the former. This man so calm, so majestic in silence and in speech, the judge among the judges, the prophet among the prophets, the high priest among the priests, who is he? Our minds if they are illuminated by the Holy Spirit and by the way the Jewish people would not today re-echo the sentence of Caiaphas.

Our minds enlightened by the Holy Spirit, our hearts and our wills answer thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, my Lord and my God. Caiaphas hypocritically rent his garments. May God help us to rend our hearts in acknowledgment of our sin and of the fact that Jesus Christ has borne sin and in thankful gratitude that we have someone who is the Messiah, the Son of the living God and that he belongs to us.

Charles Wesley wrote, depth of mercy can there be? Mercy still reserved for me? Can my God his wrath forbear? Me the chief of sinners spare? There for me the Savior stands, shows his wounds and spreads his hands. God is love, I know, I feel. Jesus weeps but loves me still.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, we are grateful to thee again for these great passages from the word of God which call us to face the question of Jesus of Nazareth. And we acknowledge, Lord, that he is Messiah, Son of the living God, our Lord and our God.

Purge from our faith that which is impure, that which is dishonoring to thee. And may it be holy and God honoring and glorifying to his name, him who has borne the contradiction of sinners that we might have life. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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