

54. Jesus Was Tried by the Sanhedrin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the tragic results in the life of Judas because of the fact that his heart was controlled by sin and was desperately wicked. In our topic today, we will see what happened as Jesus was taken to the home of the high priest and placed on trial before the Jewish religious leaders.

Once the disciples forsook Jesus, and fled, Mark 14:53-56 says, “And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.” It was against the law for the Jews to have a trial in the middle of the night, but that did not stop the Jewish religious leaders from convening a court of the entire Sanhedrin to put Jesus on trial, so they could carry out their evil under the cover of darkness. John 3:19 says, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” We see that all of the chief priests, elders, and scribes gathered together that night.

Meanwhile, Peter had followed at a distance to see what they were going to do to Jesus. We see that he went right into the courtyard of the high priest. John 18:15-16 says, “And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.” Peter then went and sat down by the fire with the servants so he could keep warm in the cold of the night.

The council was the Sanhedrin. We see that the chief priests, and the Sanhedrin, asked people to come and give testimony about Jesus. They wanted to make it look like they had evidence against Jesus, so they could condemn Jesus to death. We see that many people were willing to give false testimony against Jesus, because these were the very people that wanted to condemn Jesus to death. However, the testimony of these false witnesses did not agree. The Law was very clear about the requirement that witnesses must be in agreement in their testimony. Deuteronomy 17:6 says, “Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.” Then, this same requirement is repeated in Deuteronomy 19:15, where we read: “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” The fact that the testimony did not agree meant that the testimony should have stopped immediately, but these men were determined to condemn Jesus to death, even if they broke every law in the Old Testament.

The chief priests were not going to stop the trial until they had an excuse to put Jesus to death. Mark 14:57-60 says, “Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, ‘We heard Him say, “I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another

made without hands.” But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?’”

Here, we see that the chief priests brought forward additional false witnesses. These witnesses said what they claimed Jesus had said. John wrote what Jesus had actually said when He cleansed the temple three years earlier. The Jews had asked for a sign from Jesus. John 2:19-21 says, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” The chief priests were trying to get witnesses who would accuse Jesus of a plot to destroy the temple in Jerusalem. However, even their testimony did not agree. That meant that their testimony should not even have been considered.

John made it clear, when Jesus made this statement early in His public ministry, that He was talking about the temple of His body. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul wrote, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who* is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” The statement by Paul makes it clear that the people of that day used the word “temple” to speak of the human body, so it was not a case that the religious leaders did not understand what Jesus meant. Instead, it showed that they chose to misquote Jesus to further their case and give them a reason to destroy Jesus.

However, we see that the disciples of Jesus also lacked such spiritual understanding until after the resurrection. John 2:22 says, “Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.” Once the disciples saw Jesus, and knew that He had risen from the dead, their understanding became clear about what Jesus had meant. Jesus promised the disciples, and all future followers, that one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit would be to give us understanding. John 14:26 says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” We can depend on the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual understanding which the world cannot receive.

Finally, the high priest stood up and began to question Jesus directly. Mark 14:61-65 says, “But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, ‘Prophecy!’ And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.” Jesus showed all of the people gathered there that night that He was innocent by not trying to defend Himself against false witnesses.

The high priest then asked Jesus a direct question, when he said, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” The word “Christ” means “*The Anointed One*”. In Daniel 9:25, we read, “Know

therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, *There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.” The word translated “Messiah” is the exact same Hebrew word that is translated “Christ” in this verse. Then, the high priest asked if Jesus was the Son of the Blessed. The high priest did not want to even use the title “Son of God”, so he used “Son of the Blessed” which would still be a title for the fact that Jesus is God.

In answering the question, Jesus used the same words that are given in the title for Himself that John later used several times in the book of John. That title was first used of Christ in the book of Exodus. Exodus 3:14 says, “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”” Then, Jesus went on to make it very clear that He is the Son of God. Jesus said that the day would come when the Son of Man would be sitting at the right hand of the Power. Jesus also said that there was coming a day in the future when He would be seen coming with the clouds of heaven.

The high priest reacted immediately by tearing his clothes. Leviticus 21:10 says, “*He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.*” In this verse, we see that the Word of God clearly forbid the high priest from tearing his clothes (something that was done by the Jews in times of great sorrow or grief). The Jewish Talmud said that a high priest who heard someone speak blasphemy against God was allowed an exception to the requirement in Leviticus. As a result, the high priest tried to pretend that he had great sorrow because he had heard Jesus speak blasphemy by saying that He is the Son of God. In actual fact, the high priest was the person committing blasphemy, because he was working to kill the Son of God to maintain his own power and control over the people.

In addition to tearing his clothes, the high priest also said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” By these words, the high priest asked the Sanhedrin to pronounce the death penalty. The religious leaders agreed with the high priest that Jesus had just spoken blasphemy. They condemned Jesus and said that He deserved to be put to death. That was exactly what the high priest wanted them to say.

Then, the religious leaders showed their total rejection of Jesus by spitting on Him. They also blindfolded Jesus and began to beat Him. They mocked Him by telling Him to “Prophecy” and the officers struck Him with their hands. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the religious leaders broke many of their own laws in order to condemn Jesus to death. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why the religious leaders rejected Jesus.