

76. Jesus Was Condemned by the Sanhedrin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that when people know what they are doing is evil, they try to hide their deeds under the cover of darkness. Jesus said, in John 3:19, ““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.”” The chief priests, elders and Judas certainly demonstrated the truth of that verse that night. We will see that these leaders continued to demonstrate their evil hearts by holding a trial for Jesus in the middle of the night, which was against the law.

It was probably now close to midnight. Luke 22:54-62 says, ““Having arrested Him, they led *Him* and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him.’ But he denied Him, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’ And after a little while another saw him and said, ‘You also are of them.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’ Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, ‘Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.” Here, we see that the first trial of Jesus was at the home of the high priest in the middle of the night.

John tells us, in John 18:13-14, ““And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.”” Then, Mark 15:55-56 adds, ““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.”” Finally, the high priest said in Matthew 26:63-66, ““But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: 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.”” Here, we see that their goal was to pronounce Jesus guilty and condemn him to death.

Meanwhile, Peter had followed Jesus at a distance and had entered the courtyard of the high priest. Some of the men started a fire in the courtyard and sat down together. Then Peter sat down with them. One of the servant girls saw Peter sitting by the fire and said, ““This man was also with Him.”” Peter immediately denied and said, ““Woman, I do not know Him.”” Here, we see that Peter was depending on his own strength and he acted and spoke out of fear. A little while later, another person said, ““You also are of them.”” Peter again spoke out of fear and said, ““Man, I am not!””

About an hour later, someone else said with great confidence, “Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.” Matthew 26:73 says, “And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.’” Here, we see that Peter spoken with a Galilean accent and so his own words caused this person to recognize that Peter was a follower of Jesus. Peter gave his third denial and said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” At that very moment, the rooster crowed. and Jesus looked at Peter with an intent look. This was probably also a look of great compassion because Jesus had warned Peter earlier that this was exactly what he would do. Then, Peter remembered the words of Jesus and realized what he had just done. Peter was suddenly filled with grief and went out of the courtyard to a place where he could be alone; and there, he wept bitterly.

Back in the courtyard, Luke 22:63-65 says, “Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, ‘Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?’ And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.” Here, we see that the chief priests and the others who were there that night did many things to show their hatred against Jesus. This was not a legal trial, because it was done at night. Under the cover of darkness, the religious leaders showed their hatred for Christ by the way they physically and verbally abused Jesus.

They mocked Jesus and spoke abusive words to Him. They beat Him. They also taunted Him by blindfolding Him and then taking turns striking Him on the face and asking Him to tell them who had hit Him. They also spoke many things that were blasphemous against Jesus. Leviticus 19:15 says, ““You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.”” The things that the chief priests and elders were doing to Jesus were all various forms of injustice and so they were against the law because the law required that everyone be judged in righteousness.

The Jewish leaders actually had two trials during the night, which was illegal because it was not considered legal to have a criminal trial during the night. The first trial was before Annas who was considered the high priest by the Jews. That trial is recorded in John 18:13-24. The second trial was before Caiaphas whom the Romans had appointed as the high priest in place of Annas. That trial is recorded in Matthew 26:57-68 and Mark 14:55-65. These trials were actually held before the chief priests and council because Mark 14:55-56 says, “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.” Here, we even see that they were looking for false witnesses to give them an excuse to condemn Jesus.

However, Luke 22:66-71 says, “As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask *you*, you will by no means answer Me or let *Me* go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.’ Then they all said, ‘Are You then the Son of God?’ So He said to them, ‘You *rightly* say that I am.’ And they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’” Here we see that the chief priests and council knew what they

had done at night was illegal and so they waited until daybreak to give their formal judgment to make it appear like they had obeyed the law.

Here, we see that they asked Jesus the same basic questions that they had asked Jesus during the night. They immediately asked Jesus, “If You are the Christ, tell us.” Before answering their question, Jesus summarized their unbelief. He told them that they would not believe even if He told them that He was the Christ. In addition, Jesus told them that there were two other things that they would not do. They would not answer His questions and they would not let Him go. By this last statement, Jesus made it clear that this was not a trial but was actually the carrying out of a decision that they had made much earlier. There was no way that they would have an honest trial because an honest trial would have shown that Jesus was innocent.

Then Jesus said, “Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.” This statement caused the religious leaders to be filled with anger because they knew that Jesus was saying that He was the Son of God and that He would sit on the right hand of the Father. This anger was shown by all those who tried to deny that Jesus was the Son of God. Later, in Acts 7:56-57 we read, “And said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord.” Here, we see that when Stephen said that Jesus was standing at the right hand of the Father, the Jews who were there plugged their ears because they did not even want to hear. This same attitude was present in the lives of the Sanhedrin as they looked for a way to destroy Jesus.

Finally, the Sanhedrin asked Jesus directly, “Are You then the Son of God?” Jesus made no effort to try and please or deceive the Sanhedrin when they asked a direct question. Immediately, Jesus answered, “You *rightly* say that I am.” The seventy men that made up the Sanhedrin suddenly had to make a choice. They had to decide if Jesus was insane, if He was a liar or if He was telling the truth. His miracles, including the raising of Lazarus from the dead after four days, showed that He was not insane and that He was not a liar. That left the Sanhedrin with another choice. They had to recognize that Jesus is God and worship Him or they had to deny what they knew to be true. Nearly all of the men on the Sanhedrin chose to accuse Jesus of blasphemy instead of worship Him.

Many people today are like the Sanhedrin. They are choosing to deny that Jesus is the Christ so that they can continue to follow their own sinful ways. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to obey the words of Ephesians 4:15 which says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” Christ showed love and forgiveness even to those who put Him to death. We want to help our children learn to show that same love by our own example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by example the importance of speaking the truth in love even when people strongly oppose.