



The Religious Trial

Matthew 26:57-68

1. The Courtroom (verses 57-58)
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If you have read John Bunyan's classic work, "Pilgrim's Progress," surely you remember what happened to Faithful in the city of Vanity Fair. In their journey to the Celestial City, Christian and Faithful had come upon Vanity Fair, and had to pass through. These two strange looking men were noticed instantly by those in the town. They were clothed differently, wearing only simple clothes. They spoke differently, not speaking the language of Canaan. They acted differently, turning their eyes from beholding vanity and refusing to purchase anything, but the Truth. When they refused to conform to the world, they were arrested, beaten, and brought before the court.

Christian and Faithful were charged with causing "commotions and divisions in the town." They had simply refused to engage in their evil deeds. But, the city of Vanity Fair saw it as a threat. Faithful was tried first (Christian would later escape). Faithful was brought before the Judge, the Lord Hate-Good. The names of the twelve jury members were Mr. Blind-man, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Lyer, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, and Mr. Implacable. Three witnesses came to make testimony: Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank.

Envy told the judge that Faithful had said that "Christianity and the Customs of our town of Vanity, were diametrically opposite, and could not be reconciled. By which ... he doth, at once, not only condemns all our laudable doings, but us in the doing of them." Superstition told the judge that Faithful had said that "our Religions was naught, and such by which a man could by no means please God. ... Your Lordship very well knows what necessarily will follow: that we still do worship in vain, are yet in our Sins, and finally shall be damned." Pickthank told the judge that he had heard Faithful speak against "our noble Prince Beelzebub" and other honorable friends in the down, like the Lord Old-Man, the Lord Carnal-Delight, the Lord Luxurious, the Lord Desire of Vain-Glory, the Lord Leachery, and Sir Having Greedy.

Faithful was then given an opportunity to defend himself, which he did quite well, clarifying what exactly he did say and didn't say. But the jury, with heart set against Faithful, found him guilty. The climax of the trial comes when Mr. Blindman, the foreman of the jury, summed it up well when he said, "I see clearly that this man is a Heretick." Faithful was handed over to the authorities "to be put to the most cruel Death that could be invented." He was scourged with whips. He was lanced with knives. He was stoned with stones. He was pricked with swords. He was burned to ashes at the stake. He was "faithful unto death."

The parallels between faithful's trial and the trial of Jesus Christ are many. Oh, the names of the jury were different. Oh, the charges against Jesus were a bit different. Oh, the exact sentence pronounced against Jesus was a bit different. Oh, the death that Jesus died was a bit different. But, overall, the same thing took place. Jesus Christ had entered this world and had confronted the world with its practices and lawless deeds. As a result, the authorities of His day came to hate Him. When they had finally captured Him, they gave Him an unfair trial, distorting His words, mis-representing Him, and doing all they could to find Him guilty. Like Faithful, Jesus too was "put to the most cruel Death that could be invented." -- the Roman cross.

We will begin this morning where we left off last week, in verse 57, where we will read about His religious trial. Jesus actually had two trials before being condemned. The first trial was before the religious authorities. The second trial was before the Roman authorities. Though Rome governed the area of Palestine during the days of Jesus, the Jews were given a measure of self-rule, which means that they were able to decide their disputes by themselves. However, the Jewish courts were prohibited from executing its criminals. And so, those being found worthy of death were brought before the Romans. As the Jews determined that Jesus was worthy of death, a second trial needed to take place.

Today, we will examine "The Religious Trial." In a few weeks, we will examine "The Roman Trial." Below is our text:

Matthew 26:57-68

And those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. But Peter also was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death; and they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" And the high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses?"

Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death!" Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ, who is the one who hit You?"

Let's first focus our attention upon, ...

1. The Courtroom (verses 57-58)

Jesus, bound as a prisoner (John 18:24), enters the courtroom to face His trial. As He entered, Jesus saw Caiaphas, the high priest, sitting as judge. Jesus saw the Sanhedrin sitting as jury. From the gospel of John, we know that before He arrived here, Jesus was first taken to Annas, a former high priest, and father-in-law of Caiaphas (John 18:12-24). Annas briefly questioned Jesus and sent Him on his way for the formal trial before the entire Sanhedrin. Perhaps it was during the time that Jesus spent with Annas that the members of the Sanhedrin were quickly assembled.

It was late at night, presumably somewhere past midnight. These men may have been awakened at home and summoned for this important meeting. The entire Sanhedrin consisted of 70 religious leaders: priests, teachers, and elders. We have no way of knowing exactly how many of the men were able to come this night on such short notice. But, we do know that at least 23 of them arrived, for 23 were needed to form a quorum. My guess is that almost every leader showed up. You don't hear about the biggest trial of your lifetime, only to stay at home and watch television. No, ... you come.

As Jesus looked around to survey the situation, He gazed into the eyes of many men that He knew. Jesus had grown up as a Jewish man, coming several times each year to Jerusalem. He spent much time in the temple as a young man, asking questions and learning from others. These men would have been prominent priests and scribes and would have been around the temple often. I'm sure that Jesus had spoken to several of these men as He taught in the synagogue.

Furthermore, Jesus was very familiar with the politics of the day. He knew who it was that was the current high priest. He knew who it was that sat on the high court. They were the highest religious court in the land. This Sanhedrin is comparable perhaps to our Senate (without the religious connotations).

This trial actually took place at the home of Caiaphas (Luke 22:54). Apparently, he lived in a larger home with a courtyard, where people could assemble. It was large enough to hold the Sanhedrin as well as an overflow crowd that had assembled to watch the proceedings. Certainly, the council of the Sanhedrin would have been front and center and all others would be around. Among those in the crowd was Peter. Though we are told in verse 56 that "all the disciples left Him and fled," Peter didn't flee too far. In verse 58 we are told that "Peter ... was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome." This was a bold move on Peter's part. This crowd that assembled in the courtyard were certainly many of the same ones who had come to arrest Jesus. There were those present who saw Peter attempt to defend Jesus when he drew the sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. To come and be identified with Jesus was a dangerous thing for him at this moment. (Next week we will get a closer look at Peter's experience during the trial of Jesus).

This was no friendly court. When Jesus entered this courtyard, He entered a lion's den. These men had set their hearts against Jesus. Even a year or two before this scene, they had "counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Matt. 12:14). They had attempted to arrest Jesus, but had failed many times in their attempts. Back in chapter 26, verse 4, "they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him."

Finally, Jesus had been captured. Finally, He stands before them in a hasty trial at night. Now was their chance to destroy Him. And they tried to destroy Him! Beginning in verse 59, we begin to see ...

2. The Witnesses (verses 59-61)

In verse 59 we read, "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death." From the start, this trial wasn't about justice. They weren't interested in discovering the truth. They weren't interested with discerning the facts of the case. There was no due process in this whole affair. In their minds, they knew that they wanted to get rid of Jesus of Nazareth. And they would use any means possible to remove Him from their midst. In this case, they were seeking false testimony, that they might condemn Him to death. They were willing to hear anybody say anything in hopes that a due reason might be found to condemn Him.

Their hearts were so hard against Jesus that they were looking for a fault in Him someplace. Notice that at this point, they haven't even formally charged Jesus of anything. They simply wanted to find a fault in Him. How typical this is to human nature. When your heart is against someone, it doesn't matter what good they do. You are interested in the bad that you see in them. In fact, you will seek to find out their faults. You will let your mind dwell on these things and continue to convince yourself of how wrong that person is. When they do anything, and you will interpret it in an unfavorable light. "Did you see what they did?" "Did you hear what they said?" "Did you see that look on their face?"

Though the good that they do is much, in your eyes, it becomes little. Thought the bad that they do is little, in your eyes, it becomes much. This is the exact opposite of love. Love will look at the little good, and will think much of it. Love will look at the much bad, and will think little of it. Isn't this what 1 Corinthians 13:7 says? Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." When your heart is for someone, the transgression against you matters not. When you see or hear of something bad about someone, love will work hard to justify them in your sight. "What he did against me hurt, but I will bear it gladly, because I love him." "I can't believe what she said, surely, there has to be some reason for what she said it like they did. Perhaps she was tired. Perhaps she just doesn't quite understand." "I heard what so and so did. I trust that there is some sort of explanation for it." "He blew it. He blew it badly. But, I'm going to endure with him, because I love him."

The motive of love will work hard to justify another in your own mind. But exact opposite is true when it comes to hate. Your mind will work very hard to condemn another person in your own mind. This is exactly what was happening with the Sanhedrin. Their heart was set against Jesus. And they were seeking to get rid of Him. This was clear to others as well. In Matthew 27:18 we read that Pilate "knew that it was because of envy that they had delivered Him up."

The idea we get from our text this morning is that witness after witness after witness came forward. The New American Standard has a good translation, "the whole Council *kept trying* to obtain false testimony." Now, we don't know how these witnesses were obtained. Perhaps the Sanhedrin announced that right there to the crowd that anyone who wanted to come forward and testify against Jesus would be welcome to come forward and say something. Perhaps they had a list of those people living in Jerusalem who were known to say bad things about Jesus. Perhaps these people were awakened and summoned to come and say something against Him. Perhaps there were friends of the Sanhedrin who sent search parties out into the streets of Jerusalem to seek to find anyone that they could find to give a testimony against Jesus. I wouldn't be surprised at all if some were bribed.

But, none of the testimony stuck. Verse 60 tells us that "they did not find any [incriminating evidence], even though many false witnesses came forward." According to the Old Testament law, this counsel needed at least two witness in order to convict Jesus of a crime. Deuteronomy 19:15 says that "a single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."

I can just imagine the long line of witnesses that came forward. One witness would come and say one thing. Another witness would come along and try to say the same thing, but some of their testimony was contradictory. And so, the testimony would be thrown out. The contradictions must have been huge discrepancies. As the judge and jury were willing to find out anything that they had against Jesus, it must have been very obvious that things didn't quite line up. After a bit, a few more witnesses would come forth. But again, their testimony was found to be greatly inconsistent. Nobody could agree on what Jesus did, when He did it and where He did it.

Until finally, two witnesses came forward to give testimony against Jesus. And they agreed! They had both witnessed it! They certainly agreed on when and where Jesus did this most horrible things. One man said (in verse 61), "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" The other man claimed that he had heard Jesus say the same thing! And everybody was elated. Finally, two people can agree! Finally, we can condemn Him to death! ... It is only now that we see ...

3. The Charge (verses 62-66)

The desperation of this trial is clearly demonstrated when two witnesses actually did agree. Had there been an American lawyer in their midst, surely he would have said, "Objection, your honor. This testimony is entirely irrelevant. It is unrelated to the issue at hand." But, in the trial of Jesus, it didn't much matter. They were attempting to use any testimony that they possibly could use. When there was an opportunity to turn it against Jesus, they tried to do so, and thus, they clearly revealed their heart in this entire trial.

So think with me about this accusation against Jesus. Is this really such a crime? To say that "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days?" Today in this age of terrorism, you might be arrested and thrown in prison for making such a statement, as, it might reveal a plot of terror similar to what took place on 9/11. But it has only been in recent years that we have become especially aware of these types of things. But, in the days of Jesus, nobody was even capable of destroying the most magnificent building in Jerusalem by Himself! And the words about rebuilding it again was certain insanity. In fact, this is what the people thought when Jesus initially said these words. Jesus said in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews had responded to Him by saying, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" (John 2:20). When they heard this initially, their response was that Jesus was crazy. In the book of John, we get the clarification that Jesus "was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:21), referring to His resurrection. "Destroy this temple [of my body] and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

In verse 62, we find the high priest standing up and saying to Jesus, "Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" In other words, the high priest was saying, "We have you now! What will you say about Yourself?" At this moment in the trial, all was silent. The focus of everyone's attention in the courtyard was upon Jesus. ... "But Jesus kept silent!" (verse 63).

At this point Jesus could have easily explained His words. He could have said, "First of all, your words aren't exactly true. I never claimed that I would destroy the temple. I simply said 'Destroy this temple,' implying that someone else might destroy it. Second, and more importantly, I wasn't talking about the temple upon the mount. I was talking about my body." With such an explanation, the Sanhedrin would probably have gone back to seek other testimony that might have a better chance at sticking. Or, perhaps they may have chosen to convict Him anyway (as they did with Faithful). However, in such a case, Jesus would have died of slander and not for being the Messiah, which wasn't in God's plan. As we shall see in a moment, Jesus died for being the Messiah! He died for being exactly who He was!

So, Jesus chose to remain silent. Perhaps the charge against Him was so ridiculous that Jesus chose not even to answer it. Whatever His reasons, His silence was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." Jesus remained perfectly silent.

Step back a moment and think about this. Of all the things that Jesus did, nobody could accuse Him of anything that He had done wrong. They had to resort to something that Jesus said. They had to resort to some, obscure statement about the temple. This observation is a subtle hint as to the innocence of Jesus Christ. The requirement of the law for sacrifices was an unblemished animal. There could be no defect in the animal. It couldn't be lame or blind or have any type of physical blemish. And the same is true of Jesus Christ. For Him to be our sacrifice, it was necessary for Him to be blameless and innocent. We will see this to be a big issue in the Roman trial. Pilate will ask the Jews, "What evil has He done?" Though not the main point, here in the religious trial, the innocence of Jesus is clearly seen in their lack of ability to find any wrong in Him.

One benefit of the silence of Jesus was that it forced the high priest to get down to the main issue. He had seen the accusations come which were trivial. He now brought it down to what they all wanted to know. Look at verse 63, "And the high priest said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.'" At this point, the high priest asked Jesus the most straightforward question of them all. "Are you the Messiah!" (Note, they are still looking for some crime to charge Jesus with committing).

Now, on several other occasions, Jesus had already revealed Himself to various people that this was indeed the case. The first time that He did so was early on in His ministry. In Luke, chapter 4, the story is told of how Jesus returned to His home town of Nazareth and was given an opportunity to preach to the synagogue in which He grew up. He asked for the scroll of Isaiah to be given to Him. He opened it to the very end (what we know of as Isaiah 61:1-2). He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). He rolled the scroll back up, gave it to the attendant, sat down, and said, "Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Everyone knew that this was a Messianic prophecy! Everyone knew that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. For after He spoke, "all in the synagogue were filled with rage" (Luke 4:28) and they tried to kill Him.

I can think of another occasion during which Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. The story is told in John 4 of a sinful Samaritan woman that Jesus met at the well. As she came to draw some water, Jesus struck up a conversation that addressed many different topics. At one point, this woman said, "I know that Messiah is coming; when that One comes, He will declare all things to us" (John 4:25). At that point, Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26).

On another occasion, Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi with His disciples. He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt. 16:13). When they gave various responses, He said, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). It was Peter who said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Jesus then told Peter and the other disciples "that they should tell no one that He was the Christ" (Matt. 16:20). As Jesus continued on in His ministry, it was more and more obvious that He was the Messiah. And yet, it was still a bit veiled from the people. At one point, the Jews said to Jesus, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24). Jesus told them, "I told you, and you do not believe" (John 10:25).

But now, Jesus stands before the high priest who demands that Jesus give him an answer! "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God!" This was the strongest, most sacred oath that the high priest could utter. He was imploring Jesus with all of his might to answer this one question plainly. And Jesus answered him plainly by saying, "You have said it; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (verse 64). His reply began simply with the words, "You have said it." (verse 64). In Mark's account of this same story, Jesus said, "I am" (Mark 14:62). This is as straightforward an answer as you can give. With unmistakable clarity, Jesus confessed to who He was. The Jewish people can never claim that their Messiah didn't make it plain to their forefathers who He was!

The issue with the Jews of Jesus' day is not that they didn't know who the Messiah was. The issue was that they refused to believe. Jesus said, "I told you, and you do not believe" (John 10:25). The issue for many today is that they don't believe.

This past weekend was my 20th high school reunion. We had an informal gathering on Friday night. We had a formal gathering on Saturday night. Of the 300 graduates in my class, about 100 of them returned. I had an opportunity to speak with many of them about what the Lord had done in my life. I was greatly saddened at the coldness of many of them. It's not a matter of knowledge with many of them. For I know of many who grew up in church and have heard the name of Jesus for many years. Rather, it's a matter of belief. However, I was especially encouraged with one gal who chased me down, because she wanted to talk with me. We all had an opportunity to write about our lives since high school. My entry was bigger than all others, because I used it as an opportunity to give my testimony of what Christ has done in my life. She read it and came up to talk to me about it, for she is a Christ-follower as well. However, she was the exception and not the rule. The issue with many of my classmates isn't lack of knowledge. It's lack of faith.

The Lord gave abundant opportunities this weekend to testify of His grace. I was asked to pray before our meal last night. Sensing the deadness of the people, I wanted to use it as an opportunity for the gospel. I prayed about God's kindness to all of us, to sustain us for 20 years! I then prayed Psalm 90, "teach us to number our days that we might present to You a heart of wisdom." I then prayed how we would see the necessity of worshipping God, who has clearly revealed Himself in creation and in Jesus Christ. Someday, all of us will bow the knee to Jesus. Some will do so willingly. Some will do so unwillingly. I prayed that we would all be ready for that day. Then, I prayed that we would thankfully eat of this food. My heart was to use the platform that was given to me to be used as a testimony for Him. I wanted to use my 90 seconds of prayer in the most efficient manner as possible. I wanted to press upon their minds of their future. They will bow someday to Jesus Christ and now is the time to deal with it. In my prayer, I did exactly what Jesus did in His answer to the Sanhedrin.

With His confession, Jesus knew that His fate would be sealed. And so, He gives one last statement that will come back to haunt these Jewish leaders someday. He said, "hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (verse 66). In other words, it may look like you all are in control of things today. "You have bound me and I stand here helpless before you. You have gathered a hostile crowd surrounding me. You are sitting as judge over me. But there will be a day in which the tables are turned. There will be a day when you are bound and I stand in judgement of you."

His quotation mixes together two Old Testament allusions to the Messiah. Psalm 110 pictures the Messiah seated at the right hand of God, a place of power and authority. Daniel 7 pictures the Messiah returning to claim His everlasting, all-powerful kingdom. They were famous verses in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah. Upon hearing this, there was no doubt as to what Jesus was saying. It was clear that He was claiming to be the Messiah. But, He wanted to make sure that it was clear!

It was clear to the high priest. For verse 65 tells us that "the high priest tore his robes, saying, 'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?'" (verses 65-66a). They answered and said, "He is deserving of death!" In Biblical times, people would often tear their clothes in a demonstration of their great sorrow. For instance, Jacob tore his clothes when he heard of Joseph's supposed death (Gen. 37:34). Also, Joshua tore his clothes when he heard that the Israelite army was

defeated (Josh. 7:6). Here, the high priest tore his clothes to show his great sorrow at the blasphemy of Jesus. The sad thing is that he wasn't sorrowful. It was a great display of hypocrisy! Surely, he was rejoicing inside! They had finally captured Jesus and had found a charge that would stick.

It's at this point that the great irony of the text comes (which helps us to understand the main point). The religious leaders had discerned that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. In fact, it is this very fact that will cause them to send Jesus to the Roman authorities to be killed.

So, why did Jesus die? He died for being the Messiah! These Jews got it all right! They properly identified Jesus as being the Messiah! Their problem was that they refused to believe it! They had their own idea of what the Messiah ought to be like. When Jesus came upon the scene, they knew that He certainly couldn't be the Messiah. They didn't see the power. They didn't see the glory! Rather than being willing to evaluate the words of Jesus, they refused. And so, they missed God's man and destroyed Him instead. I just can't help at this point to stress to you that they got it all right, but in the end, they got it all wrong.

The Jews at this point remind me of Amelia Bedelia. Perhaps some of you children know who I am talking about. She is the maid, who simply can't follow instructions. She takes everything literally. One day, she arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers to do her work. Mrs. Rogers gave her a long list of things to do. One of the things on the list was "dust the furniture." Amelia said to herself, "Did you ever hear tell of such a silly thing. At my house we undust the furniture. But to each his own way." She went to the bathroom and found some dusting powder and began to shower the dust all over the furniture.

Another thing on the list read, "draw the drapes when the sun comes in." Amelia Bedelia said to herself, "Draw the drapes? That's what it says. I'm not much of a hand at drawing, but I'll try." So, she pulled out a sketch pad and proceeded to draw a picture of the drapes. Also on the list was the following: "Put the lights out when you finish the living room." So, Amelia went through the whole house and unscrewed all of the lightbulbs and hung them up on the clothesline. She said to herself, "So those things need to be aired out, too. Just like pillows and babies. Oh, I do have a lot to learn."

Amelia Bedelia was one who got things exactly right. But, Amelia Bedelia got it exactly wrong. This was the Jews! They understood quite clearly that Jesus was the Messiah. And yet, they didn't understand it at all!

We ought not to be surprised. This was all prophesied of the Messiah. Isaiah said, "we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Jesus, Himself, had told the Jews that He spoke in parables, "because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:13). The same was true of them regarding the Messiah at this moment. Though they rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah, they didn't understand Jesus as the Messiah. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:8, "none of the rulers of this age has understood [God's wisdom]; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

4. The Mocking (verses 67-68)

With the official charge against Jesus now established, His guilty verdict was assured. In verses 67-68 we see Jesus beginning to bear His punishment, right in front of the entire gathered assembly. We read that "they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, 'Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?'" This was all done to insult the Lord of Glory. Since Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, they were attempting to demonstrate to all how He was lying.

Yet, through all of it, what did Jesus do? He did nothing. He took the punishment upon His body. Why? For our sins. Though Jesus could have changed the entire course of actions, with 12 legions of angels at His disposal, He wasn't willing to do so. This was the greatest evil ever committed. Here was the only innocent man ever to walk upon the planet receiving an unjust and illegal trial. But, praise be to God, for His sacrifice means that we go free!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 31, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
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