

# King Jesus before His Accusers

Matthew 26:57-75

Halifax: 6 May 2007

## Introduction

This morning I want to carry on with our series in Matthew's gospel.

- We recently completed a section in which we looked at preparations for Jesus death.
- Last time, we began that section in which the preparations are over and we find King Jesus fully entering into the suffering that the Father had appointed for Him as our Redeemer.
  - Last time, we saw Him before His Arrestors—
    - We saw how He was betrayed by the treachery of Judas...
    - And how He was arrested in the night...
      - Yet how in the midst of it all,
        - He who was arrested showed Himself to be in control of the whole affair—acting not as One who was taken against His will, but as one who was deliberately giving Himself to His enemies.
        - He continued to conduct Himself with the bearing of a King even as He gave Himself into His enemies' hands.
  - This week, we shall see Him before His Accusers.
    - And once again, we will see His regal bearing before His accusers—
      - from the ones who falsely accuse Him of wickedness.

TRANS> I want you to see first of all that...

### **I. From His accusers, King Jesus receives the most horrific treatment.**

- A. In Matthew's account that we read today, you can see how He is brought before Caiaphas the High Priest and the scribes and elders...
  - and how this assembly is just looking for some occasion to put him to death...
    1. This was no trial to ascertain truth at all—
      - a. It was an effort to come up with something they could charge Him with that would be worthy of death.
        - You see, they had a bit of problem...
          - God, in His judgement, had put Israel under Roman domination.

- The Jews still had their own ecclesiastical courts, with the high priests presiding, but they did not have their own civil government.
- The Romans had given them the authority to punish certain offences, but they had not given them authority to carry out capital sentences.
- And of course, the Jewish leaders had already determined that they must find a way to put Jesus to death.
- This meant that they had to come up with charges against Jesus that the Romans would acknowledge.

TRANS> In an effort to pull this off,

- b. They have a number of witnesses come forward,
  - but none of them come up with anything that will really serve their purposes.
- 1) But then at last, some witnesses come forward who twist the words Jesus had spoken when He had said,
  - “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”
    - When Jesus said that, He was speaking about the temple of His body...
  - But these witnesses twist his words to say that He threatened to destroy the temple itself and to build it in three days.
    - Now it was a great offence to destroy a holy place.
    - This is something that all in the ancient world would have acknowledged.
      - Caiaphas starts to get excited about this charge!
- 2) What’s more,
  - Caiaphas sees in this Jesus’ claim to divine powers and asks Him under oath if he is the Messiah, the Son of God.
    - When Jesus not only affirms this, but also makes the claim that He will be the One who will come in the clouds to judge—
      - a prerogative belonging to God alone...
      - Caiaphas has found what he was looking for!
  - Immediately he declares it to be blasphemy and those assembled in the court agree that Jesus is worthy of death...

- Now the Romans would not recognise blasphemy as a capital offence,
  - but as Jesus claims to be the Christ (or the Messiah) who was the king of the Jews,
    - they can present the charge to Pilate as treason.
    - Obviously, if Jesus is going to be the King of the Jews, He must overthrow Caesar as King of the Jews.
- Caiaphas and the court are satisfied with the charge of blasphemy...
  - and before the Romans, they have the accusation of treason.

TRANS> And now that this charge has been concocted, the court does a very wretched and unspeakable thing...

2. They begin to treat the Son of God with horrendous disrespect...
  - a. They spit in his face to show that they utterly spurn his authority!
    - There was, perhaps, no greater way to show contempt than this...
      - According to John Gill,
        - “the Jews say, that he that spits before, or in the presence of his master, is guilty of death,”
          - so nauseous and filthy was it accounted.”
      - And how much worse was it spit in the very face of the Son of God.
        - They are showing that they have no regard for Him.
  - b. They also beat Him and slap Him about.
    - By this they deny His power...
    - They set themselves up, in this way, as those who have power over Him,
      - denying that He was able to destroy them all with his breath if He had so chosen to do it.
        - See what blindness and malice is in them to strike the one who is appointed to be their final judge!
  - c. And then they play Blindman’s Buff with Him, a game known from ancient times when a man is blindfolded, struck, and called upon to say who struck him.
    - The Greeks called this game κολλαβισμος.

- They do this to deny that He is a prophet...
  - to mock Him and say that He is no prophet who cannot even tell who strikes Him.

TRANS> What wretched hospitality they show to the Son of God who came to dwell among us!

- We ought to be sickened by it...

B. But brothers and sisters, you need to understand that we are all a part of this...

- This is the way we treated the Son of God when He came to redeem us!

1. Do you see who these men were that did these things?

a. This is the high priest—the one who was appointed by God to be a type or figure of the only Mediator between God and man...

- There was only one temple that God had appointed to reveal His glory, and only one High Priest in each generation...
  - The High Priest was a figure of the only Mediator between God and men, and those who sat in this council represented the whole Church of God!

b. As such, these were the ones who were called and appointed by God to receive the Saviour in behalf of the whole world...

1) They were chosen by God to be the welcoming committee of the Messiah when He at last came to gather the world to Himself and to save us from our sins...

2) These men are our representatives!

- They represent us all!
- They acted in our behalf.

2. And brothers and sisters, they represent us very well!

- Now one of you can excuse yourself as a non-participant!

a. What does every human being do when we are first confronted with Christ?

- We do what these men do—we begin to look for a pretext by which we may reject Him...
  - We invent contrary standards of righteousness that justify everything from the bitterness we harbour against our neighbour to abortion...
    - from the denial of God as Creator to justification of our Sabbath breaking...

- from denial of the divinity of Jesus to excuses for our disobedience to our parents...
- Oh how the world labours to suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness!
  - How we labour to suppress the truth as soon as it confronts us in our sin!
  - There is not a one of you who can claim that you are free of such conduct.
    - And such conduct is so reprehensible, to whatever degree it is found, that it deserves the wrath and curse of God...
      - not only in this life, but also in that which is to come.
- b. This rebellion is native to every man, woman, and child until the LORD changes our hearts...
  - Jesus told us that no one could see His kingdom until we are born again.
    - The Spirit of God must give us a new heart that loves God and that delights in His law.
      - Until then, we are blinded by the god of this world such that we refuse to accept the truth.
    - And even after we are born again,
      - we continue to struggle with the flesh rising up against the Spirit and suppressing the truth.
  - Yes, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin are our representatives in Adam!
    - This is what we are until God reaches out to save us.

TRANS> What a dreadful reception we gave to the world's only hope of salvation when He stooped to come to us in our need!

- What marvellous grace is displayed in Him,
  - that He should be willing to come into such a world as ours to redeem it!
  - that He Himself should be willing to bear to shame and the curse of God that has justly fallen on such wicked creatures as we.
    - Here He is, coming to save us...
    - And here we are,
      - Inventing pretexts by which we may utterly reject Him...
      - Spitting in His face as those who reject His authority...
      - Striking Him as those who deny His power...
      - Mocking Him as One whose word is not true.

## **II. The Apostle Peter could not bear all this shameful treatment of His Lord!**

### A. He knew who Jesus was...

1. He himself had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
  - He had seen His miracles and His godly life...
  - He had declared that he was willing to die for Him,
    - and only a few hours before,
      - he had courageously shown himself ready to fight when Jesus was arrested in the Garden, even though grossly outnumbered.
2. But Peter was disturbed that, at least as far as he saw it, Jesus was not now acting like the Son of God at all...
  - When Israel was in Egypt and the Egyptians pursued them, the LORD had parted the Red Sea...
  - When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace, He had delivered them from the flames so that even the smell of fire was not in them.
  - When they were in the storm at sea, Jesus had spoken the word and the wind and waves were immediately subdued.
  - When the lame and blind and the infirm had been brought to Him, Jesus had healed them.
  - When legions of demons confronted Him, He had commanded them and they had immediately obeyed.
  - Whenever the Pharisees or Sadducees had come against Him,
    - Jesus had always put them to silence—they had never bested him...
3. But what was Jesus doing now?
  - a. Why had He allowed these men to arrest Him and take Him away?
    - 1) Why did He stand meekly before them in silence and bear with all their unjust and foolish accusations?
    - 2) Why did He allow them to spit upon Him and slap Him about and mock Him?
  - b. This was all unconscionable!
    - This was no way for the Son of God to behave!
    - Who would think Him to be the Christ if He continued to behave like this?
      - Peter had been ready to fight for Him,
        - but He was not ready to stand with Him while He willingly allowed Himself to be shamed like this!
      - How can Jesus stand by and let this injustice continue?

TRANS> And so you see what Peter does...

- He does just what Jesus told him he would do...

B. He denies his Master...

- Notice the progressive nature of his denial...

1. At first he is reluctant...

a. He uses the old “I don’t know what you’re talking about” line.

- You’ve all seen this...
  - I did it in university after I called into the head RA’s office for filling the elevator with Wall Street Journals...
    - “What newspapers?” I asked innocently...
    - “The ones with your name on the address label” was the reply...

b. This is how our denials of Christ often start...

- We are offended with him, so we plead ignorance...
- We don’t like something He has commanded,
  - But instead of saying, “Lord, if you are going to ask me to that, I don’t want anything to do with you.”
    - We say, “I don’t really understand what you are saying.”
      - We don’t want to know about it so we pretend not to know.
      - We blur everything as a way of avoiding it.

TRANS> But this is not the end of it for Peter.

2. Now a little crowd is drawn in to accuse Him:

- v. 71: “This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

a. Now Peter goes deeper into his denial...

- He goes from evasion to direct denial with an oath...
- He swears by the God of truth, He appeals to the sovereign God who searches the hearts of men, that He does not know the man!
- Now Peter has perjured himself!

b. We often suppose that we can engage in a little lie, a little sin here or there...

- But learn from this that we have no ability to contain our sin...
  - As soon as we move away from the will of God in a little thing,

- we distance ourselves from the grace of God.
- We have taken matters into our own hands,
  - so the LORD leaves us to ourselves and allows us to discover our weakness!
- There are many murderers who never dreamed that they would hurt a fly when they first began to rebel...
  - A young girl violates her conscience to please her boy friend,
    - and the next thing she knows, she is aborting a baby.
  - David never thought his gaze upon Bathsheba would lead to the murder of his neighbour...
    - but it did.
- Do not suppose that you can give yourself to a little sin and then stop it!
  - We are kept by the grace of God and it is not for us to put ourselves in the place of His Lordship and rule.
  - As soon as we do, we have no idea how far we will fall.
    - All those you see who are in bondage to sin began with little sins.

### 3. Peter is pressed further...

- the whole room seems to be abuzz about him...
  - a group comes and adds some evidence:
    - “Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.”
    - The Galileans had a distinctive accent that was easily recognised, and they use this as evidence against Peter...
- a. Peter is in a corner...
  - He takes more drastic measures
    - He begins to imprecate himself...
  - That is, He calls down a curse upon his own head...
    - “God have vengeance upon me if I know Him!”
- b. Oh see what a terrible contradiction this is!
  - 1) We who know Christ know that we are accursed apart from Him!
    - Well now Peter calls down a curse upon himself if he does belong to Him.
    - In effect, he is saying,

- “Let me be cursed if I have anything whatever to do with the only Salvation of God!”
- 2) See how feeble this mighty man of courage is apart from the sustaining grace of God!
- Learn from this to rest in that grace.
    - If Peter can fall so far, how much more can you!
    - Do you see your weakness?
    - Do you see what folly it is to presume upon your own strength?
      - Learn to pray that you be not led into temptation!
      - Do not dabble in sin, walk in communion with your Lord.

C. But oh brothers and sisters, look at the marvellous grace of our Lord!

1. Peter had forgotten the word of the Lord Jesus...
  - a. He had forgotten how the Lord had warned him of this...
    - He had forgotten how the Lord had told him expressly that he would deny Him.
  - b. This is what we do when we deny our Lord in whatever way we deny Him...
    - We become deaf to His Word.
    - We go on as if He had never spoken to us.
    - We go on with indifference as if His word is nothing...
2. But when the cock crows, Peter is suddenly awakened to the voice of Christ!
  - a. This is the grace of God,
    - This is the LORD bringing His word to him by the power of the Holy Spirit.
      - There are many who hear the word and it has no lasting effect on them at all...
        - It can stir up a little excitement, a little fear, a little comfort,
          - but it does not really reach them so as to transform them...
    - But if you are a child of God,
      - You know what it is for the word of God to come to you with power and conviction...
        - to stop you in your tracks, to awaken you, to convince you!
    - This is a work of God.

- b. And if not for the grace of God,
  - Peter, like Judas, would have never returned.
    - If not for the grace of God bringing the voice of God to stop him...
      - what would have kept Peter from joining this crowd that was soon to shout “Crucify Him, Crucify Him?”
        - How else would he be able to sustain the lie that he does not know him?
  - But praise be to the Lord!
    - Peter was not left to destruction!
      - The grace of God abounds toward those who have been truly called,
        - and it always comes back to us.
- c. Oh that this might happen to any of you today whose hearts are hardened to His voice...
  - any of you who have been ignoring His call...
    - to any of you who have been resisting His will...
    - to any of you who have not received His word.
  - Oh may His word break into your soul and root you out of yourself!
    - May it come to you with power to kill you in order that you might live.
    - May it jolt you out of your lethargy!
- 3. What a marvellous thing that God should speak to rebels like us, even after we have denied Him...
  - Have you heard His voice?
    - Are you serving Him today with sincerity and walking in His truth?
    - How grateful you ought to be!
      - How good He has been to you!
      - Where would you be today if He had left you without His word?

TRANS> And so we see poor Peter before his accusers...

- Peter could not bear to own Him as Lamb before the slaughter when He knew Him to be the Son of God...
- But now let us look at Jesus before His accusers...

### **III. Jesus is not ashamed to declare that He is the Son of God even while allowing Himself to be shamefully treated by His enemies.**

#### **A. Look at how He conducts Himself before His accusers!**

1. At first, He remains silent...
  - a. By this silence He shows that He is not intimidated by them—
    - He is not as one who is desperately seeking to find a way of escape...
  - b. By this silence He also shows that He has no regard for what they are saying—
    - He does not consider their charges worthy of an answer.
2. But then the High Priest puts Him under oath and asks Him directly if He is the Christ, the Son of God.
  - a. Jesus says, “It is as you say.”
    - 1) There was a certain difficulty in answering this question...
      - a) Caiaphas had a very different understanding of what the Messiah was to be than Jesus had.
        - Caiaphas certainly did not expect the Messiah to be a Lamb destined for slaughter before the Sanhedrin!
      - b) This is why Jesus says, “It is as you say.”
        - He is saying in effect,
          - “Since you put it that way, I cannot deny it, for I am the Christ.”
        - Jesus had ordinarily avoided declaring that He was the Christ to the multitudes because they had such a distorted understanding of what the Christ was supposed to do...
          - But now a double purpose to affirm it...
            - By affirming it,
              - He makes it known once again to the church in all ages...
            - And by affirming it before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin,
              - He gives them occasion (in their minds) to crucify Him now that the hour had come.
- 2) We are told in Luke that Jesus also tells them that He knows that even though He tells them He is the Christ, they will not believe...

- Clearly, they are not interested in investigating His claim to see if it is true.
- They are not ready to examine the evidence.
  - They have already concluded that if He says yes, they will count Him a deceiver.
    - Even though all the evidence was there, and even though He had fulfilled many signs to show that He was the Messiah,
      - they did not even consider the possibility that it was true.
- Now think about this...
  - There was no crime in saying that you are the Messiah if you are in fact the Messiah!
    - But this is what Jesus is charged with!
    - No evidence is brought forward to show that His claim is not true...
      - it is just automatically treated as a crime that He should claim to the Messiah...
      - even though all the people in this court believed that the time appointed by God for the Messiah was at hand!
  - They simply assumed that He was not the Messiah because He was not acting the way they expected the Messiah to act...
    - especially in being arrested and standing trial before the Sanhedrin.

TRANS> But you see here that Jesus affirms that He is the Christ, even though now He does not look at all like the Christ, the Son of God, to anyone...

b. And then He adds the marvellous declaration this claim that :

- (v. 64) "Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- 1) He may not look like the Messiah as He now stands before them as one headed for the cross...
  - but all this is going to change!
  - He is going to come with majesty and glory as the Son of God to judge those who are this day judging Him!
    - Sitting at the right hand of the Power shows that it will be given to Him to exercise the very power of God...

- And coming on the clouds shows that He will use that power to bring judgement on His enemies...
  - God's coming on the clouds always refers to the majestic display of His power.
- 2) They will not see Him in this status with their bodily eyes until the last day at the resurrection of the just and the unjust...
- But they will see the effects of His reign in their own generation...
    - He will be raised from the dead...
    - He will pour out His Spirit upon His disciples and they will be endowed with power to preach the word and to work miracles...
    - He will begin to gather the nations to Himself...
    - And He will come on the clouds to bring judgement upon Jerusalem as He has already foretold.
- 3) It is this powerful testimony of Jesus, coming as one armed with the power of God,
- the incites the rage of Caiaphas and draws from his lips the word: "Blasphemy!"
  - The very idea that this One who is as a Lamb prepared for the slaughter is the Son of God is enough to call for His death!

TRANS> Peter was ashamed and afraid to identify with Him in this humbled state,

- but Jesus is not ashamed at all!

B. Jesus was not ashamed because He knew that giving Himself as a Lamb for the slaughter was the very heart of the work He had come to do!

- It was glorious for Him to do this!
1. In one way, it is true,
- it was not fitting that the Son of God should go be treated so shamefully by His enemies—
    - especially by the very One who was at this time appointed to represent Him as High Priest!
  - On the part of the Sanhedrin (these Jewish leaders who represent the world and the church),
    - it was a display of reprehensible injustice—a thing most shameful!
2. But for the Son of God Himself,
- It was His most glorious act!

- He was acting very much like Himself when He stood as a Lamb destined for the slaughter!
- a. He was giving Himself up wholly to do the Father's will in order that the world might be saved—
  - not every person,
    - but the world which Jesus and all His saints will inherit!
    - the world as soon to be renewed by Him as a world of perfect righteousness where love abounds.
- b. He was most like Himself in that He is a God of infinite love and grace who is willing to bear this rude treatment in order to bring this salvation.
  - This is the very highest form of royal dignity!
    - that the King should sacrifice Himself for the sake of His subjects!
    - that He should use His authority not to oppress, but to bless!
  - Oh it is a marvellous royal love the way royal love ought to be!
    - This is the bearing of King as kings ought to be!
- c. He is not ashamed of the cross and of His presence under trial by these wicked men because He knows exactly what He is doing...
  - He is on the path of procuring our eternal salvation!
  - He knows what the end will be!
  - He knows that His glory for all eternity will be found in the shame that He, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God is here undergoing!
    - Blessed be His name forever and ever—
      - The gracious redeemer!
      - The Saviour of the World!

## **Conclusion**

Peter did not glory in the cross at the time Jesus was crucified, but how he gloried in it afterward!

- It is Peter who said:
  - 1 Peter 2:20-24: But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.