

26:60-61

But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came. Now look at this. What kind of group are we dealing with here? “We need liars down at the high priest’s house. Oh, thank you for coming.” Think about that. They filled the place with false witnesses. They are desperate to kill their Messiah, unbelievable.

yet found they none. One understands from Mark’s account that these are not contradictory statements. While some of the more modern versions have this second phrase missing in them it is because their underlying Greek texts or manuscripts do not have them.⁴ It is my philosophical choice to believe the church had the correct text for all if not most of its history than to assume that the more modern discoveries reflect the original reading.

So...when Matthew says this second time that “they found none,” he is speaking of a particular type of false witness: the kind made up of two or more which actually agree, making a single, valid witness. In Mark it speaks of two where in Matthew it summarizes them as one valid voice.⁵

It seems that, at this point, Matthew is seeking to establish Jesus’ innocence. He does go to some lengths to include some in this band who hold to Jesus’ innocence: Consider Judas.

*Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed **the innocent blood**. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.*

Here, the one responsible for this entire fiasco, humanly speaking, is declaring that Jesus is indeed “innocent” following the obviousness of Jesus’ condemnation.

*Matthew 27:18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. 19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with **that just man**: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*

Pilate’s wife even thinks Jesus is a “just man.” Then, there’s Pilate himself:

*Matthew 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. 23 And the governor said, Why, **what evil hath he done**? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. 24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of **this just person**: see ye to it.*

Now, what about you? Have you found fault with this Christ? To find fault with God the Father is to find fault with His Son. Often, many of us have incomplete theologies. We believe God is Omnipotent. We think to ourselves: “God can bless anybody like in Job 42. If He can, then why doesn’t He do so divorced from the ‘Hell on earth’ He serves up to Job in the meantime?” If God can shape Joseph with means that are not so abrasive or aggressive, then why not do it? Why allow so much pain? These are good thoughts and they are thoughts of those like me and you that are convinced God is all-powerful and all-knowing, but we are not so

⁴A text would be the conglomeration of two or more Greek manuscripts and are typically published by a person or a committee or an organization.

⁵By the way, this is precisely what occurs when Matthew speaks of a singular cockcrowing following Peter’s betrayal while Mark speaks of two cockcrowings. A particular cockcrowing of which Christ spoke in Matthew is comprised of two cockcrowings in Mark. That is to say, the cockcrowing of which Jesus spoke in Matthew was not that of which He spoke without the second crowing of that rooster. This works also in the story of Jairus. Matthew 9 seems clear enough that the girl is dead prior to the interruption of the woman with the issue of blood. This is established when Jesus tells those who think she’s dead that she is just sleeping without any further explanation. Matthew’s reader would assume the child is dead and that Jesus knew it prior to the interruption. Mark, on the other hand, has a second visitor from the master’s house (Mark 5:34) telling Jesus of the death of the child following the interruption. Well, what of it? Matthew, as with these “false witnesses” being a summary of two agreeing false witnesses—and with the “cockcrowing” being a summary of two cockcrowings—is in Jairus’ story summarizing two messengers from the house into one.

sure He is “all-nice.” Until we realize that all things are God-wrought for His glory, yes...but also for our good, will probably continue to find fault with our Lord.

Remember, we are talking about the Son Who said in the 9th chapter of this book that “the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.” That is to say, He can do on earth what was only to be done in Heaven to this point. He is the only Heavenly agent heretofore given Who can say “the will of Heaven is being done on earth” in answer to the prayer He prayed. To see that Jesus is on trial in Matthew’s Gospel as the agent of the Father is not only to establish the perfection of the sin offering Who died to ransom us from our sins (Matthew 20:28), but also to re-establish that the Kingdom of Heaven is righteous and is representative of a righteous Lord (Matthew 22:1-12) who sets up His Son as King.

That is to say, if we find fault with Jesus here, at the hands of His enemies, we have fault with the God of Heaven. We are, as you might expect, intrigued at the very notion that we are considering God’s fitness to be adored. Yet, as tender, delicate people who feel the weight of health and hearing and wealth and welfare and bills and blights, we are sometimes interested in asking “Does God do all things well?”

Of course, the Ultimate application to me is the reality that there is no overly aggressiveness I have experienced when I consider how infinitely aggressive the Father was with His Own Son in directing Him to drink the cup of my extraordinary sins. How “extreme” can we blame God of being? Can we find fault with God after all of this? When we step back after living through this drama from the bleachers, we find blood-curdling awareness that God is faultless, Christ is faultless, and we—we are the ones seeking to find fault.

At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. If that were possible, Jesus would be a wizard. So right here they are trying to get Jesus to confess to being a worker of magic and a wizard and they have him. They can stone him right then and there legally.

*Leviticus 20:27 A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or **that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.***

There are some other issues that wouldn’t allow the Jews to kill Jesus on this day because of the Passover. Isn’t it amazing? God planned the crucifixion of Christ on a day when the Jews were not allowed to kill Jesus. Therefore, they had to find something he was worthy of death on a day that they could not kill him because the ordinary way that they killed people was by stoning. And Jesus had to be cursed by God and the only way to be cursed by God according to Deuteronomy 21:22 and Galatians 3:13 is for him to be nailed to a tree.

This shows up again in 27:40 where those on the ground begin taunting Him as He hangs on the cross. The truth is, Matthew is not telling everything he knows here. Of course, he may not have known anything about what the Holy Spirit was communicating here.⁶ Do you remember Jesus saying “I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18)? It’s the same word here. Jesus does not deny that He said this, so Matthew is at least leaving the door open for the reader to think that Jesus may have said it. So, when did He possibly say this? One idea is Matthew 16:18. Jesus tears down this temple in which He stands, but how? And then, how can we say that He has **built it in three days**?

Seven facts are presented:

1. The tearing down of the temple happened **three days** before it was built (from this passage).
2. God used to meet with His people in the tabernacle, then the temple (Exodus 40; 2 Chronicles 6-8).
3. The veil was ripped, thus effectively destroying the temple—making it of no effect.

*Matthew 27:51 And, behold, **the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;***

⁶The reader is tempted to jump to John 2 and the explanation found there but we have no indication that this was in the purview of Matthew’s audience.

More than this, it showed to the world that there was no God in that temple—effectively destroying it.

4. Three days later, Christ did ascend out of *hades*, the land of the dead (see Psalm 16:8-10 with Acts 2:24ff).
5. Jesus connects the church being built to the gates of this place called *hades* (Matthew 16:18).
6. Jesus promises to meet in the midst of His church (Matthew 18:15-20).
7. The church, must be, the built up temple that was established at Christ's resurrection when the gates of *hades* could not hold Him, and He meets with us today.

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And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? Now, if Jesus were able to pull off this wizardry then I could see the demand for justice, but I am confused as to why it would be such an outrage if Jesus had simply claimed to be able to do this. **what is it which these witness against thee?** I am afraid I would have said, “What is there to answer, numbskull? You haven't had two witnesses agree. What do you want me to answer?” So this is the problem. They can't render Jesus guilty without two agreeing witnesses. So the high priest knows the only way that they are going to be able to get him and condemn him is if he will in the ears of 70 witnesses—confess. And Jesus, “as a lamb before his shearers is dumb opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

1. Matthew 1:23 quotes Isaiah 7:14
2. Matthew 2:23 refers to Isaiah 11:1
3. Matthew 3:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3
4. Matthew 4:14-16 quotes Isaiah 9:1-2
5. Matthew 8:17 quotes Isaiah 53:4
6. Matthew 11:4-5 refers to Is 8:13-14, 35:4-8, 42:3 & 61:1-2
7. Matthew 11:23 refers to Isaiah 14:12-14
8. Matthew 12:17-21 quotes Isaiah 42:1-3
9. Matthew 13:14-15 quotes Isaiah 6:9-10
10. Matthew 13:40-43 refers to Isaiah 13:6-8
11. Matthew 15:8-9 quotes Isaiah 29:13
12. Matthew 15:21-28 refers to Isaiah 22:22-23:18
13. Matthew 22:11 echoes back Isaiah 28:20
14. Matthew 26:62 reminds us of Isaiah 53:7

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But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, some newer versions⁷ say this simply means that the High Priest is placing Jesus under oath. Again, knowing Jewish jurisprudence it is astounding to me that the high priest is so concerned with “holy matters” like “oaths before God” when he has been so complicit with discarding this same law in matters pertaining to how Jesus is being tried. **that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.** Having no witnesses and no guilt, the High Priest—as desperate as ever—seeks an admission of guilt through confession from the man Himself.

On another note, one might notice the difference between the question from the high priest and the question from Pilate. One was concerned about his confession to claims of being the Christ, therefore substantiating the need to kill Him for blasphemy. One, if you'll notice 27:11, was concerned about the civil ramifications of one within the Roman Empire claiming to be King. The reason Pilate asks Jesus of His claims to be a King is because, although there is no mention by Matthew, the question was spurred by the mob who told Pilate Jesus claimed to be a King. One might notice that in both cases, Jesus answers in the same Hebrew hyperbole: “you said it.”

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⁷ Such as the NRSV.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, The word is 2nd person plural. Today we would say “I say unto you all...” **Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.** See comments under 16:27-28 and 24:31. Suffice to say this was Jesus rebuking the head agent for the old temple—promising the destruction of that temple. Contextually, this makes sense in view of verse 61. When would the temple be destroyed? Within the purview of those their standing.

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Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. See commentary under 3:13-17. After remembering that the high priest had here disqualified himself we remember also that this “blasphemy” was a capital crime:

Leviticus 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

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What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. It was against Jewish law for you to both hear a case and render a verdict on the same day. It doesn’t matter how guilty he was. You were not allowed to do that on the same day. Lots of injustices took place. And yet “as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

26:67-68

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68 Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? Jesus just claimed to be the fulfillment of Daniel’s chapter 7 prophecy. Surely, if He were—they would reason—He could prophecy. Peter, without question, is wondering “will this be when Jesus has had enough? Will He finally beckon His angels?”

26:69-75

See commentary on 10:2.

27:3-10

See comments under 10:4