

Introduction: We have come to the portion of Jesus' life and ministry which, as we saw last week, He describes as the hour of the power of darkness.

- There in the garden, as the disciples scatter, Jesus allows the soldiers to arrest and bind Him (John 18:12).
- Throughout my exposition of Luke, I have sought to resist the impulse to try to preach all of the Gospels at the same time and mostly stick with Luke's narrative. I am going to give into the impulse to bring in information from Matthew, Mark, and John. One primary reason is that I think there is information found there that will help us to more fully understand what is taking place.

I. STAGE #1 – JESUS BEFORE ANNAS (John 18:13-14)

- Before being taken to be interrogated by the Jewish leaders, John (alone) tells us that Jesus is first taken to a man named Annas. We are told that he is the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who is the acting high priest. From what we know of the history, Annas was according to Jewish law the actual high priest. This priesthood was held for life, and the office could only be passed on at death to one who was a Levite, a descendent of Moses' brother, Aaron.
- However, a Roman ruler had removed Annas from that position (a right he didn't have). The Jews, apparently trying to work in necessary subjection to Rome, then appointed Caiaphas so that they would have a recognized leader. This passage seems to indicate that Annas continued to have great "secret" influence and power among the leaders, and so Jesus is taken to him first. According to Luke 3:1, when John the Baptist began to preach in the wilderness, both of these men were considered high priests (in the eyes of the people). It is this same Annas before whom John and Peter will stand in a similar trial after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 4:6).
- We are not given any details about what happened in that meeting, but apparently Annas approved and sent Jesus further to stand before his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

II. STAGE #2 – THE NIGHT TRIAL (vv.54-62)

- Jesus arrives at the home of the high priest, Caiaphas. We should remember up front that Jesus is not going to be treated fairly. This is not an investigative procedure to search out a man's innocence or guilt (a main function of the leaders and high priest). Rather, they have the single agenda to destroy Jesus. They have been plotting his death, frustrated at every turn in their attempts.
- From what we know of the procedure for trials in that day, they are not following protocol. They aren't playing by the rules. When men determine to do evil, they are willing to step over every hurdle necessary to get what they want.
- However, this is a kind of pre-trial. They are going to try to build a case in the middle of the night by calling together the leaders (they are assembled when He arrives) and the gathering of false witnesses (again, in the middle of the night) so that when day comes they will be able to accomplish their task of His destruction.
- Matthew and Mark give us more details at this stage, and we find out that there is an attempt to get witnesses to speak against Him. These witnesses so contradict one another, that much time is spent without making any progress (they are trying to show some degree of legality about it). When they finally get two who almost agree about Jesus' statement about the destruction of the temple and His ability to raise it up again (which they misunderstood), Jesus continues only to respond by silence. He refuses to enter into this foolish dispute.
- Caiaphas finally puts Jesus under an oath (Matthew 26:63) and demands He answer the question, "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" His response is affirmative. Mark tells us that He answers with the Divine statement "I am" (Mark 14:62). Not only this, but He tells them that the day is coming when they will see Him return in Divine glory and the authority of heaven.
- Caiaphas responds by tearing his clothes (both inner and out garments) and asking "what further need do we have for witnesses?" This is sufficient for him. Now they have from His own lips something with which they can "nail Him." can accuse Him of blasphemy. According to Leviticus 24:16 that if anyone blasphemes the LORD's Name, they are to be put to death. The blasphemy, or speaking against God's Name, that he is accusing Jesus of is a claim of deity.
- Jesus doesn't contradict or correct Him, but again takes the position of silence. He says only enough to assure His own death.
- Caiaphas then asks the other leaders of their judgment. They respond with the statement "He is deserving of death" (Matthew 26:66). We must recognize that they could be right. Under Old Covenant law, blasphemy included claiming to be God, and if such a person made that statement they should be put to death...unless...it was true. And it was.
- This is a reality that everyone must face. Either Jesus was a deceptive blasphemer and trickster, or He was the Son of God, God in the flesh. There is no middle ground. Those who wish to read the Bible and make a judgment that Jesus was a good man and religious teacher, but reject His claims to be the Author of Life, the Sustainer of the Word, the Judge of All Men can only do so in a kind of insanity.
- Ultimately, Christianity begins with the question: Who do you say He is? If merely a man, then you should have nothing to do with Christianity and the Bible. If the Son of God, then we must realize our desperate need for Him as our Savior (for the forgiveness of our sins) and our Lord (as the Master of our Life).
- vv.63-64 tell us that after this determination was made, those who held him in bonds began to mock Him. They began to beat Him. They are now taking delight in that they have power and authority to abuse someone who claims that they are God. This eventually moves into a kind of game where they blindfold Him, strike Him, and ask Him to tell them who it was (surely the Son of God would know). And He could have told them, but He receives their mocking.

- In v.65 there is a bit of irony: the One accused of blasphemy is being blasphemed. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is receiving and allowing the blasphemy and abuse of others. He is drinking of the cup of wrath that His Father appointed Him. Now was their hour, and the power of darkness. Now the Son is further having His heel bruised.
- From this scene, let's turn back to Peter. It's important to notice that while this is taking place, Peter is in the outer courtyard of the high priest. While this high-pressure interrogation and now physical abuse is taking place, the disciple who said that He would suffer and die with Jesus if necessary is falling apart.
- In vv.55-60 we are told that three times Peter denies our Lord. While the various accounts in the Gospels are difficult to harmonize, it is clear that he is buckling under the pressure of the moment. By the time Satan is finished sifting him as wheat he is swearing oaths before God and calling upon the Lord to curse him if he isn't telling the truth: "I do not know this man and I haven't been His disciple. And may God strike me down right now if I am lying."
- v.61 tells us that in those moments something happens that fully unravels Peter. "the Lord turned and looked at Peter." At some point during that process, as the leaders are rejecting and denying the Lord Jesus, there is His self-proclaimed most dedicated and devoted disciple calling on God that he has nothing to do with Him. And how does God respond? By striking him down as he asked? But wind, and fire, and earthquake, and death? No, but a quiet look.
- The morning rooster has crowed, Jesus was right. Peter was wrong. Peter leaves the courtyard by himself, and goes and weeps bitterly. This phrase indicates deep mental anguish that leads to violent and uncontrolled weeping. It was the silent look from Christ that broke his heart. For Peter, this was the evidence of a faith that didn't utterly fail because Jesus had prayed for Him.
- Out of the ashes of this brother's failure God will raise up a mighty man of God. Now he can be used. Now he will become a fit instrument to be used for the proclamation of a Gospel for failures and outcasts and sinners.

III. STAGE #3 – THE DAY TRIAL – vv.66-71

- When day arrives, they elders, chief priests, and scribes (the official council of the Sanhedrin) assemble for the more formal trial. What they have done in the darkness will come into the light.
- They forthrightly ask Him the questions "Are you the Christ? Are you the Son of God?" Jesus answers and says that whatever His testimony of Himself, they will not believe. No matter what He answers, they won't rightly view the evidence of His miracles and teachings and they certainly won't let Him go. He is guilty in their eyes, no matter what He says. Jesus condemns them as wicked judges who are only bent on unrighteousness. Still, He confirms again that He is the Son of Man and the Son of God, that they will see Him at the right hand of the power of God.
- They condemn Him by His words, completely bypassing the miracles they infallibly knew He had done.
- People still do this today, when they deny what Jesus reveals about Himself. No matter how much evidence, no matter how many arguments, they are committed to denying and refuting Him.

APPLICATION

- Come, let us adore Him!
- What will you do with Christ? Do you condemn Him as a blasphemer, or do you adore Him as Savior of the World?