

Matthew 26:57-75  
"The Judgment Of Jesus"

It's ironic at best wouldn't you say? That the Judge of all the earth should *by* the earth be judged? That the Sinless One would stand before *sinner*s to be tried... That the *Creator* would be condemned by His own *creation*. Yet that's the scene that's set before us in the scriptures today. The Prince of Life, condemned to death...

On the one hand that kind of math just doesn't seem to add up to us. That someone so humble, so helpful, so meek & so truthful; someone so pure, so merciful, so peaceful & so loving would ever be taken, tried, beaten & crucified.

Yet on the other hand how could it be any other way? You say, "What do you mean?" Think it through. When you read through Matt Ch 5 & you hear the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor in spirit (the humble & broken before God) for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." **On & on He goes, "Blessed are those who hunger & thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."** If you honestly read through that list you'd be put in a position of thinking, "Man, if there were ever *anyone* who were truly like that. If they were honestly/genuinely humble, grieved over sin & meek; if they were hungry & thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure & one who strove to make peace... That person would be held in the highest honor! Given the Nobel peace prize, recognized & esteemed to the greatest degree man could offer." But that's not true is it? Because Jesus embodied every one of those attributes perfectly & mankind took Him, beat Him beyond recognition & nailed Him to a cross.

How could that be? It's because the mindset I just developed with you comes from a fundamentally flawed perspective. It employs faulty logic. That mindset assumes that people (at their core) are basically good. Therefore when they *see* good, they'll acknowledge it *as* good, even reward, admire & perhaps desire to *emulate* that good. However, that's not what the bible teaches at all. The bible holds the polar-opposite position. Not that man is basically good, but that man is morally corrupt from conception. That my heart is deceitful above all things & desperately wicked...

Left to myself I don't pursue godliness, I press into worldliness. Paul declared that in me, that is in my flesh *no good thing dwells*. **Now that's not to say that we're incapable of recognizing right & wrong & have differing degrees of moral conviction.**

It's to say that we aren't conceived & born righteous, sin is present from conception & therefore we're born *sinner*s. We don't gravitate *toward* God by nature, we rebel *against* God by nature. We don't look for *Him*, He pursues *us*... We're all "still born" spiritually. If we're to be alive toward God we've got to be *born again* through faith in Christ.

But this is how mankind could take a Perfect Man, humble, helpful, merciful, peaceful & righteous & nail Him to a cross. John said all that like this, "...light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."<sup>1</sup> When I'm confronted w/righteousness & see myself in the light of perfection & am forced to consider how corrupt I truly am. I will either humble myself *before* that righteousness or harden myself *against* it... That's what we see happen in Vs 57-68.

Vs 69-75 develops Peter's progression. He'll go from *defying* Christ "I will never deny You, I ready to die w/You." To distancing himself or drifting *from* Christ, to ultimately *denying* Christ. Listen, resisting Jesus (that is, disregarding or *disobeying* the word of Jesus) creates *distance* between me & Jesus & culminates in my denial of Jesus (be it in the way I speak, the things I do or take part in... you get the idea).

We left off last week with Jesus being apprehended/arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane & all the disciples forsaking Him & fleeing (just as He had forewarned them).

### Vs 57-58

Now just so you know, Matthew gives us a summary of what happened that night. He does not give us a full play by play. We learn from the other gospels that Jesus actually stood before several judges that night. He stood before both Jewish & Gentile judges in what we might consider both religious & civil trials. He was actually examined 6 times. Here we read that they led Him to Caiaphas (which they did) but 1<sup>st</sup> they led Him to Annas (who was Caiaphas' father in-law) who was really the "power" behind the priesthood. Annas had been the high priest, but Rome came along & appointed Caiaphas, so though Rome conducted business w/Caiaphas, the Jews still acknowledged Annas as well so that's where Jesus went 1<sup>st</sup>.

Then He was brought before Caiaphas. & It would seem that while He was being examined by Annas, Caiaphas had the opportunity to assemble the rest of the leaders (the scribes, elders & chief priests). These guys were the Jewish Supreme Court of their day, called the Sanhedrin.

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 3:19-20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now I'm just going to tell you that there are several things that happen in this trial that were completely illegal according to Jewish law. 1<sup>st</sup> of all they gathered & set in motion the death sentence of Jesus at night. Trials (according to their law) were to be conducted during the day, not at night. That's why we read in Luke 22 that as soon as it was day they gathered again. By that time they were going through the legal formalities, but they'd already (illegally) handed down their decision (as we'll see momentarily).

Not only that they weren't even supposed to convene formally during a feast or festival (they're right in the middle of Passover)! It just highlights the hypocrisy all the more! The "religious" leaders illegally passing judgment on the Righteous One...

But we have this interesting little vignette happening here off to the side. Matt picks up on it & points it out in Vs 58, "But Peter followed Him at a distance... to see the end." It seems as though Peter is determined to demonstrate that he's not going to deny Jesus. Remember Jesus had turned to Peter personally & told him that he would deny Him 3xs before that night was over. Peter was appalled, outraged at even the idea! "I will never deny You, I will *die* w/You if I have to!"

& I think we'd agree. It certainly took some courage to follow Jesus into that courtyard. Especially when you consider he'd just hacked the servant of the high priest's ear off w/a sword just a little bit earlier (Jesus healed him but still it seems risky).

But let's note Peter's progression. To begin with Jesus told him to watch & pray, but what did he do? He slept. Now, rather than standing firm, he's slipping. He's drifting from Jesus. He wants Jesus to know he's still following Him, but now it's at a distance. It's not that he's not following Jesus at all, he's just not getting too close.

Family, this is how it happens, this is the slippery slope that leads to compromise. How far away from Jesus can I get & it still be considered "following Him"? This is the mindset the *enemy* wants you to assume. Why? Because he knows that the farther he can get you from Jesus, the larger the divide that he can create, the easier it will be to get you to stumble and fall. "Hey, go ahead & be a Christian if it'll make you feel better about yourself. Just don't get *too* serious about it, don't go *too* far with it..."

Or how about this one, "Listen, if *you* want to follow Jesus that's fair enough, but don't be pushing it on your *family*..." Or, "You can follow Jesus, but you don't need to come alongside the kingdom *financially*, just keep your money."

These are mindsets that come on subtly, but you can't support them scripturally...

Don't be one who admires Jesus from a distance, get as close to Him as possible. Love the Lord your God *w/all your heart, all your soul, & all your strength*. How many people have you known over the years who've slowly drifted away because they began to follow Jesus at a distance? At one time they seemed so on fire, but then something happened & they slowly, subtly began to drift...

We've got to be *intentional* about honoring the word of God. That's true of anything in life that you want to excel at. You're not going to become a world class athlete fortuitously, accidentally, you've got to be intentional about it. You stop putting in the work, your ability excel, your capacity to endure disappears, it drifts away. You've got to be intentional. You want to be a great artist, you've got to put in the work. You want to be a great craftsman, or doctor, or teacher, or any other thing; it takes discipline, you've got to be intentional & when you're no longer willing to put in the work, you slip.

Listen to me, the same is true spiritually. You're not going to become a mature, godly, effective Christian by chance. You'll be intentional about it. The author of Hebrews put it this way, *"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."*<sup>2</sup> Translation, if you're not purposed in your heart to go above & beyond others (giving the more earnest heed) in your desire to understand & obey the word of God... you're running the risk of drifting away...

& Here's the thing about drifting, you rarely notice it till you're way off course. You weren't pulled, you weren't pushed, you just went along w/the current & before you know it you look up & you can't believe how far you've drifted away... Anchor deep in the truth of the word of God, lest you drift.

Peter thought he was doing good, following at a distance. But seeing what would happen next would rattle him to the core.

### Vs 59-61

You would think that for all the effort that these guys placed into planning the death of Jesus, the illegal hearing would seem like such a circus. But they were having to seek out people who would lie about Him! The problem is that the law required 2 witnesses (who hadn't communicated w/one another) to say the same thing. The ironic thing is that they seem to want to have the *appearance* of honoring the law, all the while doing things *completely* illegally.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 2:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As I said, a trial at night, illegal. Conducting the hearing at the home of Caiaphas, illegal. Tried during Passover, illegal. Being pronounced guilty the day of the trial, illegal (they could pronounce acquittal, but not guilt) guilty verdict had to wait 1 night so that time allowed feelings of mercy to rise in the sentencing. Not to mention that according to the law *false witness* were punishable by death, but here they're actually seeking them out!

Beyond that, a trial was to begin by bringing forth evidence for the innocence of the accused, before evidence of guilt was offered. Jesus wasn't allowed to bring forth *anyone*. How many people had He healed, had he restored, had He shared the ways/word of God with? He could've called forward people that He had raised from the dead, but none of that was allowed.

However, they were careful to assure they had the witness of 2 people before they brought forth a sentence of death... after-all the law required it...

Initially they were probably placing a lot of weight in what Judas would say, but he's nowhere to be found, so now they're scurrying to find others. Finally, they found a couple guys who said, "I remember a few years ago that He said that He could destroy the temple of God & build it in 3 days!" Of course even this is a misquote, it was at the beginning of Jesus' ministry found in Jn Ch 2 when Jesus said, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*"<sup>3</sup> However (context is everything) He was speaking of His crucifixion when they would destroy the temple of His body & 3 days later He would rise from the dead... Interesting it's being recalled here, just hours before His crucifixion.

But these guys twisted His words into what today we'd consider a terrorist threat. As though He was going to destroy the temple... A false witness might have right *information* but use it to make the wrong *implication*. It's still false witness, it was a lie.

**Vs 62-64**

Wait, what? Did Jesus just say what I thought He said? He said *exactly* what you thought He said.

Initially Caiaphas was frustrated, he was getting irritated & aggravated because all these people were saying all these things about Jesus & Jesus just wouldn't respond! "Don't you hear what these guys are saying? You're just going to stand there & say nothing!"

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<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Jn 2:19]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It was as the scriptures had stated centuries before concerning the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth."*<sup>4</sup> & What He did here was give you & me an example of neither entertaining nor engaging our enemies when reviled but rather commending our care into the hands of God. Peter picked up on this (you might write it down & read it later, 1 Pet 2:19-23).

What blows our minds is that Jesus could've mounted an airtight defense! Again, calling the countless people He'd healed, or made whole, or ministered to in some way. Doing things only the Christ *could* do & had been prophesied that He *would* do. But He didn't. The hour was at hand; He would pay the penalty for the sin of the world...

Finally such frustration sets in (knowing that their case was weak at best), that the high priest says, "I place You under oath by the Living God! Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" In my mind you could've heard a pin drop... Jesus looked at Him, "You said it..." Then Jesus takes it to the next level doesn't He? "Nevertheless, hereafter *you* will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, & coming on the clouds of heaven." Translation: "You're judging Me now, but the day is coming when I will judge you & you'll see Me sitting at the right hand of God." Jesus says here, "I'm the Judge ultimately/eternally & I'm coming again, you wait, you watch & you'll see..." This is a direct statement of deity & the high priest knew it. That's why he responded as he did... (Jesus just applied Ps 110:1, & Dan 7:13 to Himself, you might want to look those up later.)

Listen; when Jesus says, "I'm the Judge of all the earth, I will rise from the dead, ascend to the right hand of God, come again on the clouds of heaven & every eye will see Me." We have 1 of 2 choices don't we? We can either fall before Him in worship for who He is (the Living God), or we can scorn Him, disdain Him & consider Him a blasphemer worthy of death... I have chosen to do the former, they picked the part of the latter.

Now, if Jesus never claimed to be God, or received the worship of deity He could've cleared this all up right here. He could've said, "Wait, is *that* what this is all about? You guys think I'm claiming to be the *Christ*? To be *God*? Hey, this is all a big misunderstanding. I never said I was the Christ & I *certainly* don't think I'm God!" But He didn't do that did He?

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<sup>4</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Is 53:7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why not? Because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

### Vs 65-68

Mark & Luke tell us that they blindfolded Him & commenced to beating Him (that's why they're mocking Him, saying "Prophecy, tell us who struck You!" Because they're beating Him blinded. Of course if Jesus *wasn't* God, it *would've* been blasphemy, punishable by death. But Jesus is God & this is an open display of the wickedness of man's heart who love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil... We're witnessing the depths of man's depravity. God came *to* man, lived *among* man in total perfection & this was man's reply, "Put Him to death!" & They beat Him mercilessly. Mankind literally spat in the face of God.

We read in Isaiah, *"I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting."*<sup>5</sup> & Listen, I don't want to invoke emotion in you by being overly dramatic but I want you to realize it wasn't like they smacked Him around a bit & then moved on. **The bible declares that they beat Him so brutally, so mercilessly (having ripped out His beard & spat on His face) that by the time they were finished w/Him, He was so swollen & disfigured that He was no longer recognizable as a Man...** Isaiah 52, *"His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men;"*<sup>6</sup> When you looked at Him, it was difficult to distinguish His features He was so bloodied & bruised & swollen... How patient was the suffering of the Spotless One? Wow...

### Vs 69-75

From defying, to drifting, to denying... Peter wasn't prayed up, he wasn't taking heed to the word of God... & he failed. He wasn't questioned before a hostile court, it was a servant girl that he covered before & recoiled from.

Seeing what was happening to Jesus, Peter didn't want any part of that. So when asked if he was w/Jesus he said, "I don't know what you're talking about..."

He dismisses himself from that setting & another girl identifies him, "Hey, this guy was w/Jesus as well." He denies it again, "I don't even know the Guy!" ... This determination not to deny Jesus in his own strength isn't working out too well. Finally someone else comes up, "Man, you have to be one of His disciples, your speech betrays you!"

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 50:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.  
<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 52:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Galileans had an accent. It's like someone denying they're from the hills of Kentucky or something. You can deny it, but your speech betrays you! He starts to swear, "Listen, may God strike me dead if I even know Him!"

Does your speech ever betray you? You feel weird being a believer around everyone else so you try to fit in, but they know you're not like them? Come on out, declare your allegiance to Christ.

Btw, you might notice that each time Peter denies Jesus, it gets worse & worse. That's how sin is, it starts out small & snowballs from there. He denies Jesus, then he takes an oath, then he begins to swear. Sin goes only from bad to worse. Satan wants you to think if you just give in this one time it'll be ok. But then it gets easier to give in again, to take it farther, sin feeds on itself.

We thank God for those roosters that remind us of His word, don't we? Immediately the rooster crowed & Peter *remembered the word of Jesus*. Luke tells us at that moment the Lord turned & looked at Peter... So he went out & wept bitterly. Ps 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise."<sup>7</sup>

These tears are more than regret, more than remorse, they're repentance. Peter will return to the Lord & be restored by the Lord. You can read of that in John 21.

Listen, repentance leads to restoration. Perhaps you've slipped, you've stumbled, you've strayed from the Lord. But you're here now & you've remembered the word of the Lord & your heart is turning back to the Lord. Repentance leads to restoration. Jesus wants to restore you today, to pick you up & place you back on track that you might serve Him w/all your heart. Return to Him, be restored by Him...

#### Prayer points:

Jesus we thank You for Your overwhelming love. That You would suffer so patiently out of love for us is a love too high to comprehend. But we're humbled before You & want to turn to You & serve only You w/all of our hearts. Help us to close the gap & not seek to follow you "at a distance" but that we be a people of prayer, a people of your word, submitted to Your Spirit for the glory of Your name.

I don't really know what to add, you've witnessed for yourself the love of God for you. Jesus took our penalty upon Himself, He loves you, wants to save you. Turn from your sin, trust in Him today.

<sup>7</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 51:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.