

*Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*  
*April 18, 2021*  
*“How Close?”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.*

***NEWS***

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

The New Building is a GO!

**We Have One Service, One Pastor, One Worship Leader... All for Unity in His Body!**

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**MATTHEW 26:57-68 ~**

Caiaphas was the High Priest of Israel... sort of...

Aaron about 3,500 years ago...

Annas from 6-15 A.D.

Caiaphas from 18-36 A.D.

1) The High Priest had to get along with the \_\_\_\_\_.

2) There was little they wouldn't do to stay in \_\_\_\_\_.

The palace of the High Priest was not the normal meeting place of the Council, or Sanhedrin - συνέδριον (sün-ëd-rë-ön).

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

This tribunal was not an official meeting of the full Sanhedrin...

The best case for them, would be Jesus incriminating Himself.

- 1) He knew that anything He said would be...
- 2) He knew that nothing He could say would...
- 3) He knew that they were trying to get Him to react...
- 4) He knew that they had already violated the Law...
- 5) He knew that a sacrificial lamb doesn't...

He did not resist the evil arrayed against Him. What are we to take from Jesus' example here and His teaching about love elsewhere?

The Holy Spirit's Anointing for direct ministry and His Fruit for indirect...

To what degree is my active effort appropriate?

How can that be discerned?

Concerning the Temple, Jesus was not being literal (John 2:19-21 & Jeremiah 7). Then Caiaphas pulled out Leviticus 5:1.

Jesus' response was masterful; "You said it." Then He combined two Messianic Passages and applied them to Himself (Psalm 110 & Daniel 7).

Look at the reaction of the Jewish elite...

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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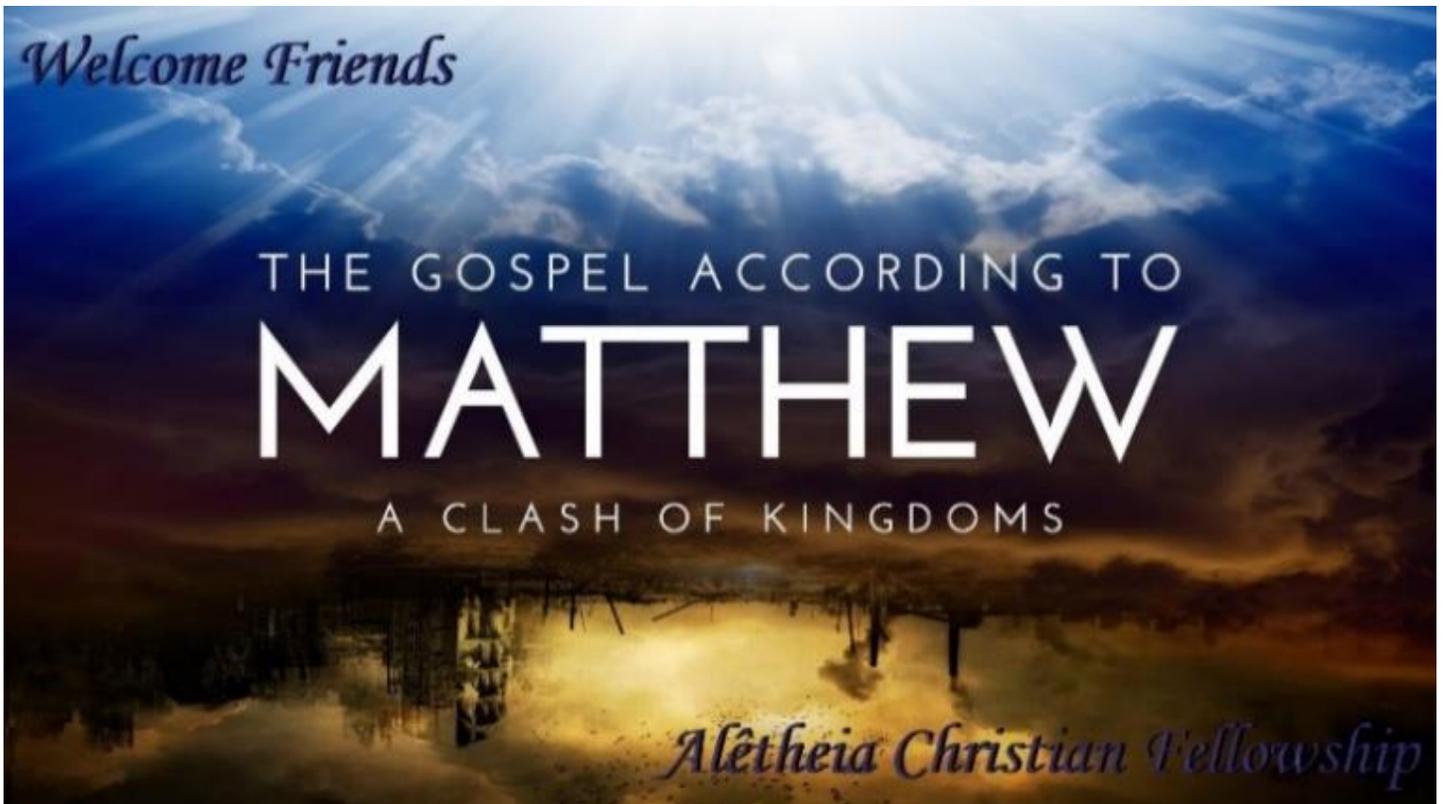
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Matthew 26:57-68, 57 Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the

scribes and the elders were gathered together. 58But 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. 59Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.' " 62The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63But 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." 64Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." 65Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" 67Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

Verse 57 transitions us into the central event of this subsection - the Jewish inquest, really inquisition, would be a better term. John informs us that Jesus was first taken to a guy named Annas and then on to Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the High Priest of Israel... sort of...



The High priest was the supreme ruler of Judaism – functioning like the Pope for Catholics. Moses' brother Aaron was the first High Priest under the Law. He was appointed to the position about 3,500 years ago by God. He was Moses' older brother and a Levite - meaning that He, Moses, and their sister Miriam,

traced their direct lineage back to Levi, son of Jacob, who was himself the grandson of Abraham.

God renamed Jacob as Israel, which essentially means one who wrestled with God.

Aaron was to serve as High Priest for life and upon his death was to be followed by his direct descendant in a hereditary succession from father to son with each one of them also serving for life.

From the earliest days the office became the target of political intrigue and power struggles leading to many self-serving and even evil High Priests. When the Greeks took control of the Jews about 300 years before Jesus was born, they appointed High Priests of their choosing.

During the 100 years of Jewish self-rule called the Hasmonean Dynasty, which came between Greek and Roman direct rule - ending in 63 B.C., things didn't improve at all. A succession of Jewish Military leaders took the title prince of Judea and made themselves High Priest. After several decades, the Jewish leaders gave up the office of High Priest and took the title of

King, then personally appointing High Priests whom they could count on to do their bidding.

The Romans picked up where the Greeks and Hasmonaeans left off, making the office an annual appointment. A person could serve as many one-year terms as the ruler allowed, but could be removed at any time. This set up a situation where on the one hand, officially there was only one High Priest at a time, but on the other, since it was supposed to be a lifetime appointment Biblically, there were multiple High Priests - plural. Each time you see Matthew use the term "Chief priests," as we just saw in verse 59, it is literally the plural form of High Priest and that's this phenomenon of multiple previous officeholders that he's referring to - High Priests of Israel, plural.

In 6 A.D., Herod the Great's son, Archelaus King of Judea, was fired by the Emperor Augustus... Why? You'll hear many reasons, but they all come down to the thing I've been saying all along... He was deposed and exiled because there was too much unrest. The only thing Rome wanted was a controlled populace that wasn't causing problems. Relative peace made for productive people and an uninterrupted flow of taxes,

goods, and services. Unruly people required the expenditure of tax money to send more troops.

Initially Quirinius the Governor of Syria replaced Archelaus. He was the first of many Roman Governors to rule Judea. Quirinius immediately fired the High Priest and appointed his choice - a dude named Annas son of Seth. Annas was High Priest from 6-15 A.D.

It was Valerius Gratus who fired Annas and appointed other guys over the years including a guy named Eleazar, one of Annus's sons. He didn't last long, and then in 18 A.D., Gratus appointed Caiaphas.

Technically, his name was Joseph, son of Caiaphas and he was Annas' son-in-law. After Caiaphas was finally deposed in 36 A.D., four more of Annus' sons were appointed... Annas, as patriarch had a stranglehold on the office for most of his long life.

Pontius Pilate came to power in 26 A.D. and was satisfied to keep Caiaphas on throughout his 11-year long tenure as Governor. That means a couple of things that are important for us. 1) First, Caiaphas was a good stooge for Pilate. There's no way the Governor was going to leave a guy as the top Jewish leader, year after year, unless they had a very cozy working

relationship. Caiaphas had to walk a narrow line between seeming to be anti-Rome to the Jews, while in reality being just the opposite. Pilate and Caiaphas maintained a public persona as adversaries, but actually had a close private relationship striving together to maintain the peace.

2) The other thing it means is what I already mentioned. It was a family business of power, prestige, and wealth. For more than 60 years the family of Annas controlled the office of High Priest. The way they did that was to be extremely loyal, behind the scenes, to their Roman benefactors. There was little the family wouldn't do to ensure that they stayed on top. It is much the same when we look at any similar position - monarch, emperor, pope, mafia don, whatever.

So, while Caiaphas was the active High Priest at the time, Annas, his father-in-law, Eleazar, his brother-in-law, as well as many others, were also regarded as High Priests and held great power and influence. The Romans appointed 20 different guys to the post in the 60 years from Annas to the revolt. The two most important things to them... Keep the peace, so taxes would flow to the Romans, and keep the Temple business humming, so the profits would flow to them...

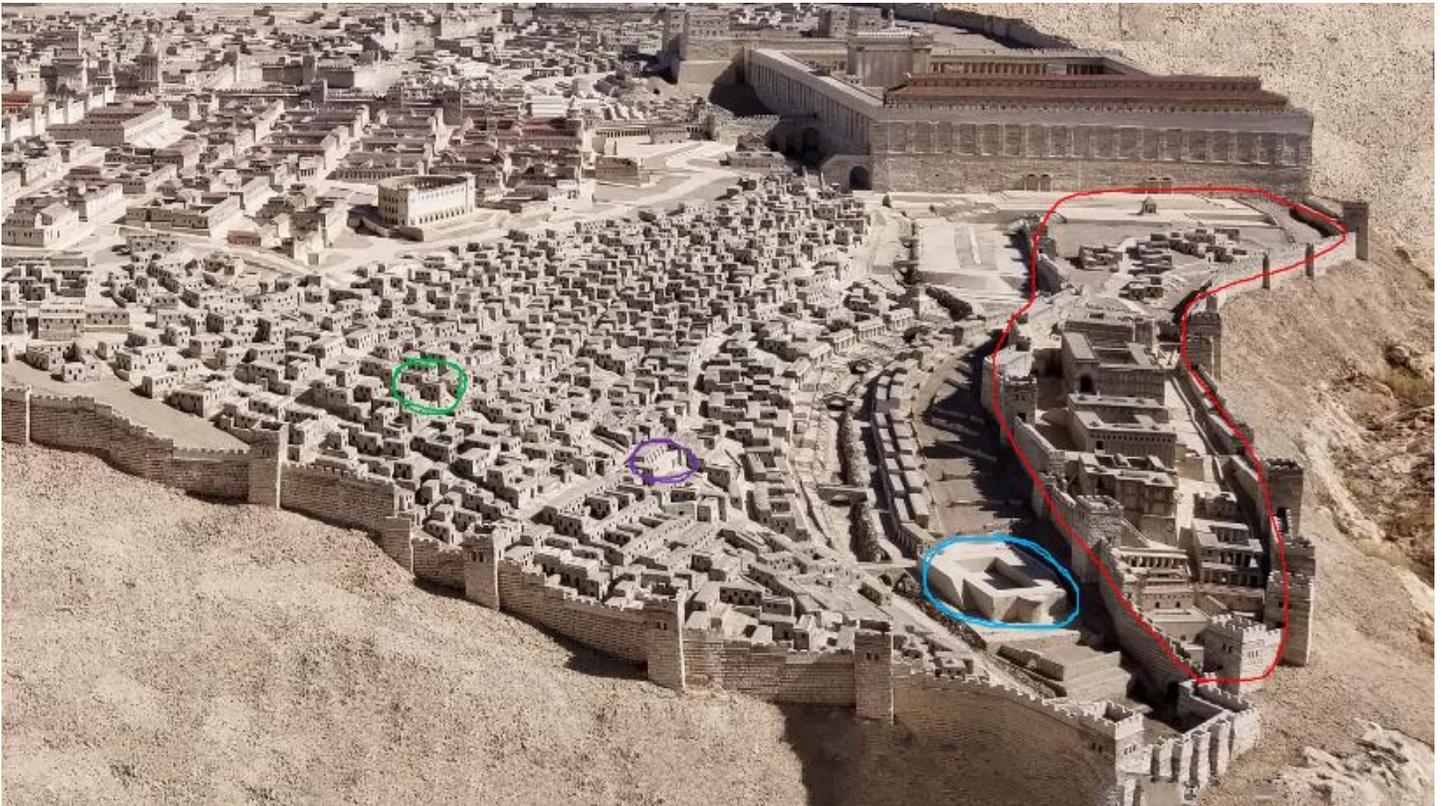
Jesus threatened both! John 11:47-50, 47Therefore the chief priests (read, Caiaphas, Annas, Eleazar, and others) and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man Jesus is performing many signs. 48If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” 49But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

Caiaphas was more right than he knew - one man did die, and not just for the nation, but for all nations.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all skip the preliminary meeting with Annas that John reports, going straight to the main event. Both men lived in the same palace and so both inquiries took place in the same complex of courtyards surrounding the palace.

Now, the palace of the High Priest was not the normal meeting place of the Council, or Sanhedrin. For nearly 23 centuries the Jewish High Council led by the High Priest, consisting of 70 other elders, former High

Priests, Scribes, influential Aristocrats, Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees, was called the Sanhedrin. But that's not a Hebrew term, it's Greek. Often translated as Council as in our verse 59 today. It is συνέδριον (sün-ěd-rē-ōn), basically meaning to sit together.



Red = the original city. Blue = Siloam. Purple = Caiaphas' compound approximately. Green = Upper Room approximately.



Daniel, Steve,  
Mariah, Tracy,  
Lloyd, Arie, Dan,  
Marcy, Luke

Daniel Lambert Easthaven, Steve Snipstead Faith Lutheran, Mariah, Tracy, Steve's wife, Lloyd Pierson Faith Covenant, Arie our guide, Dan formerly Dwelling Place, Luke Knoll and his wife Marcy Cornerstone.







The preliminary questioning by Annas was to protect Caiaphas. They wanted to make sure that they had the right guy, that there wasn't going to be an uprising to try to set Him free, that they hadn't miscalculated in some way, before getting the High Priest and other Council members involved.



Peter followed at a distance. More sermons have been preached about that statement than about what Jesus was enduring at the same time. If Peter had followed closely, oh how things would have been different.

Of course, there's much to apply there. Are you following Jesus, but doing it at a safe distance? That will never do, my friends... Following Jesus is an all or nothing thing. It's far too easy to sermonize this bit of information and because it is, I don't need to go any further - you get it. Consider for yourself all the ramifications. Pray and meditate on this event and see how you can apply it to your own walk.

Peter was shaken. He had valiantly tried to fight to the death to save His Lord and was rebuked by Him for his trouble. Peter didn't really know what to do, but he did want to know how things would turn out.

This tribunal was not an official meeting of the full Sanhedrin, but was a pre-arranged, very early in the morning, rather secretive, gathering of those members most agreeable to eliminating Jesus. They were looking for the best case they could reasonably make in order to condemn Jesus without much opposition when it became more public.

The best scenario for them would be one in which Jesus would say or do something to condemn Himself. It is a tactic still used today. Get the accused emotional; angry, defensive, offended and they will oftentimes give incriminating evidence against themselves.

What I know from personal experience is when you are under investigation, every word you say is a treasure trove for the prosecution and will be used against you. The most innocent off-the-cuff comment will come back to haunt you. When informed of your right to keep your

mouth shut - exercise it. Unfortunately, most people with the right to remain silent, don't have the ability.

Jesus did. As the kangaroo court tried to find a charge that would stick, Jesus kept silent. He refused to participate for a number of reasons. 1) He knew that anything He said would be turned around and twisted into something to be used against Him. 2) He knew that nothing He could say would change anyone's mind and was therefore pointless. 3) He knew that they were desperately trying to get Him to react, and He wasn't going to be their puppet - He wasn't going to play their game. 4) He knew that these stewards of Judaism had already violated the Law of Moses by their presumption of His guilt. 5) He knew that a sacrificial lamb doesn't speak in His own defense. In other words, Jesus understood why He was in the situation that He was in.

He did not resist the evil arrayed against Him. He passively, non-violently, practiced what He preached. If God wanted Him to suffer and die, then that's what would happen, and if God wanted to deliver Him from this trial, then that's what would happen.

What are we to take from Jesus' example here and His teaching about love elsewhere? If we truly want to follow Him closely, it presents us with a challenge.



If “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28), as the Scripture declares... What role do we play? Are we to trust God and allow things to play out as we passively observe? Certainly, we are to trust God with the results, but obviously we're not to do nothing, at least not in most circumstances. We are constantly told by the Word to interact with others in this life for the glory of God and the promotion the Gospel among other things.

Likewise, we are repeatedly admonished not to interact with others as normal human beings do, but rather with the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Therein lies the answer. It is all about being moved under the anointing of the Holy Spirit to directly represent God and build His Kingdom and being guided by the character of the Holy Spirit to indirectly do the same.



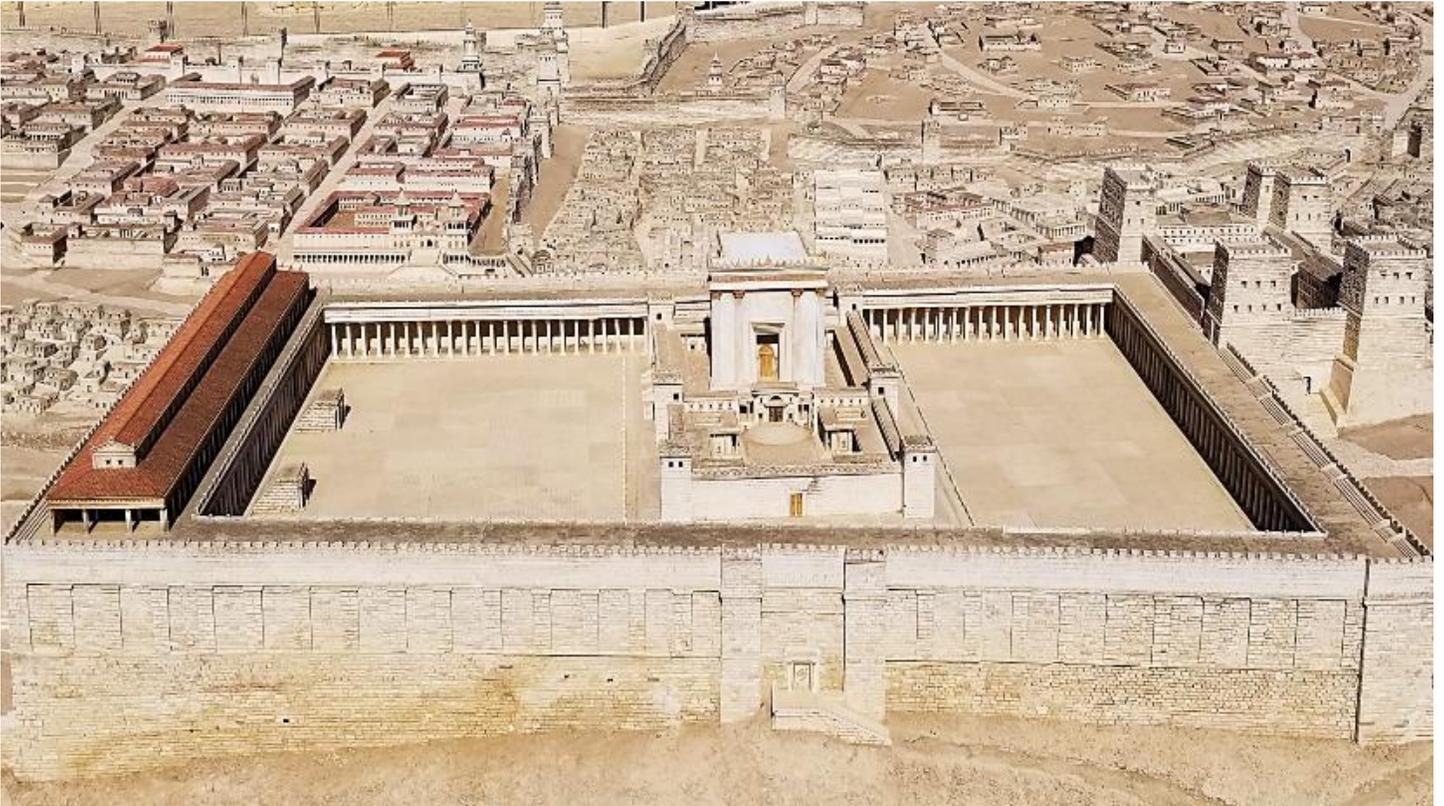
We can make use of the cliché question, “What would Jesus do?”, but more than that, what is the Holy Spirit of God leading us to do? The only way you can know that is to be completely in-tune with Him.

When a Christian does ministry work in a way that misrepresents God, or diminishes the Gospel, they are not acting under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Please note, I'm not saying anything about the reaction of others. Evil, or immature people will dishonor God and malign His Message no matter how anointed the minister... I'm saying that when the minister - in whatever type of ministry it is - themselves distorts the Truth of God, or devalues Christ as Lord and Savior, they are not ministering under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, when a Christian interacts in this world in such a way that they weaken, negate, or defile the character of the Holy Spirit - they are obviously not led by Him. Whereas it is the anointing of the Spirit that enables Christian ministry directly, it is the Fruit of the Spirit that enables Christian ministry indirectly. The first is active ministry to others, the second is our Godly character seen by others.

When you're faced with opposition, you should fight for your position to the degree that is appropriate and then trust God with how it turns out. The question you should immediately ask is what is the degree that is

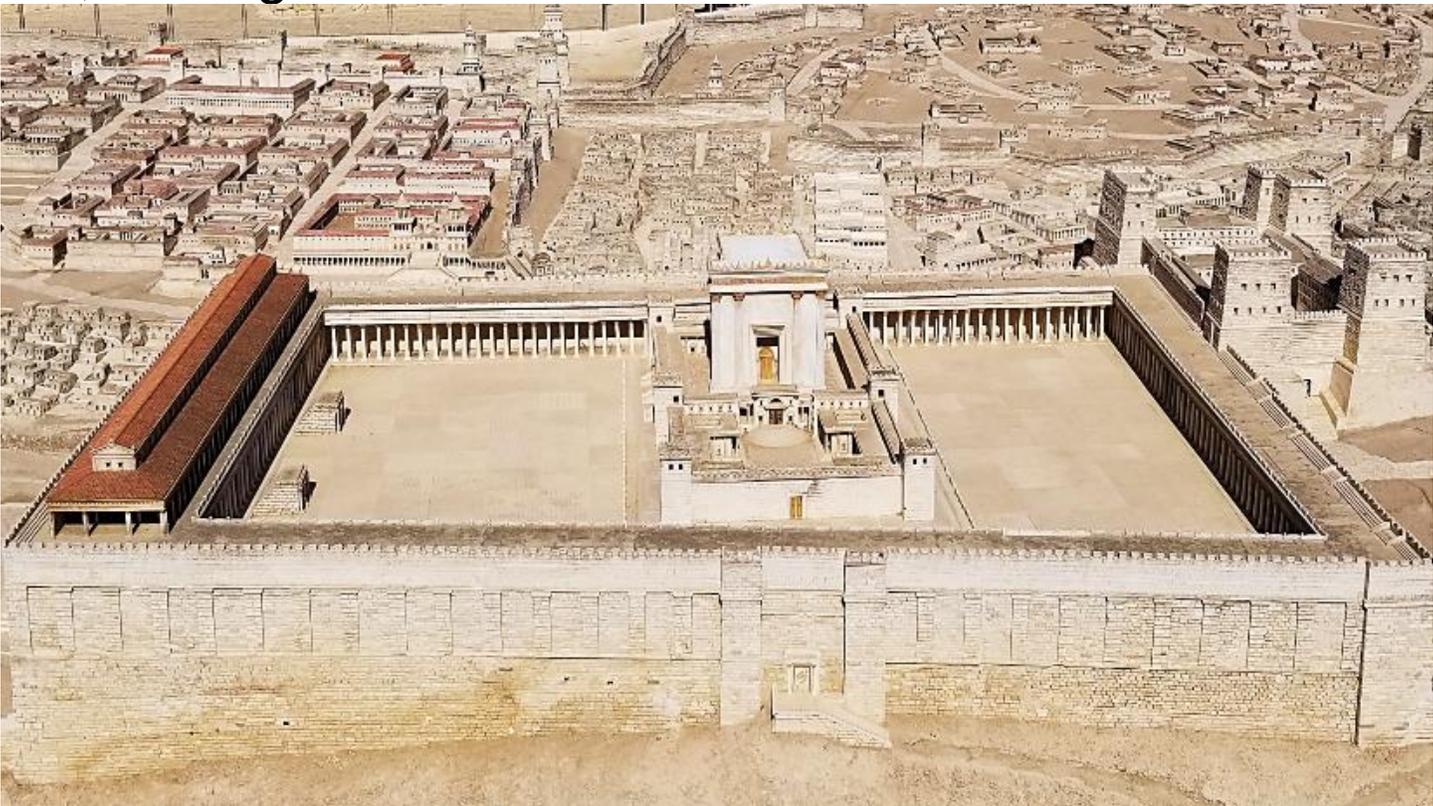
appropriate? Exactly. Once again, that can only be discerned through a close walk with Jesus - one that is far closer than Peter's walk that night.



The Temple as it stood...



Oh, no! A giant woman...



It's a model in Jerusalem.

The charge they can make stick, about the Temple, is both true and false. Jesus did essentially claim what the two witnesses agreed on, but He was not being literal. Can my literalist friends see that? The testimony was false in its application. Jesus wasn't talking about an imminent attack on a building and a miraculous reconstruction of that building.

He was talking about an end of the Covenant that the Temple represented and ushering in a New Covenant wherein He, Himself would be the Temple. As John 2:19-21, makes clear, 19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

To go a bit deeper... This was in reference to Jesus clearing out the moneychangers and merchants from the Temple. The Jews asked Him by what authority He had put a stop to the business of the Temple. The entire point that Jesus was making goes back to Jeremiah chapter 7. There, God speaks through the prophet, telling the Jews that they are living their lives as they see fit, doing what interests them and what

works for them even though it comes at the expense of others. The people lie, cheat, steal, take advantage of other people, they hurt each other, gossip, judge, ridicule... Essentially, they act like snots... Essentially, they were acting like we act most of the time.

Then they would go to the Temple and offer a sacrifice and think that all was good. The similarity between the Jews 2,600 years ago and Christians today is uncanny.

Do whatever is right in your own eyes... Perform some religious exercise... and voilà, you're good. Then because you're set, you act all holier-than-thou - what hypocrites they were - what hypocrites we are.

To some degree, the leaders understood that Jesus hadn't intended His statement to be an imminent threat of attack, otherwise they would have ended the trial with that as far more than sufficient grounds for the Romans to execute Him. Instead, the High Priest personally confronted Jesus.



If you sense hostility, impatience, and frustration in the supreme Jewish leader, you're right - it's plain. He coaxed Jesus to answer the charges, not at all interested in the Truth, or in Jesus' side of the story, but only to get Jesus to say something they could further incriminate Him with... It did not work.

Then the fully exasperated High Priest pulled out a trump card. "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." It goes back to Leviticus 5:1, where the Law states that when a person "Hears a public adjuration to testify when he is a witness," He must testify, or essentially, be found guilty of the crime and of disrespecting the judge for

not speaking up. In the ancient world, and in Biblical Judaism, there was no such thing as “pleading the fifth.” A failure to testify when adjured to do so was an admission of guilt.



It also came as a formal oath. To add gravity to the situation, the judge would basically take an oath commanding compliance and the witness would basically take up the oath and tell the truth. It was like our swearing to tell the truth in a trial.

That's the trap the High Priest set for Jesus. Jesus' response is masterful. He said what he said earlier to Judas... “You said it.” Again, as we discussed

previously, it is a phrase that doesn't translate well into English, but it answers the question in a way that agrees with what the person said without actually answering the question yourself... "Those are your words Caiaphas, not mine," but the implication is, "You're not wrong in what you said."

It allowed Jesus to obey the Law and answer, but simultaneously, it allowed Him to avoid taking up the oath. Remember, Jesus had often said not to swear. That doesn't have anything to do with swear words per se, but with taking oaths. If you are a God honoring person then you are an honest person and if that is true, your yes is yes, and your no is no.



Then Jesus went on to couch His true identity in the terms He wanted to use, rather than the terms of others. He started it off with, “Nevertheless I say to you.” It is πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (plān lě-gō hū-mēn), a three-word phrase, found three times in the Bible. All from the lips of Jesus and always to do with Judgment. “Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

To most people that seems fairly benign. It’s merely the combination of a couple of Old Testament Messianic Passages. The 110th Psalm and Daniel chapter 7. Messianic simply means Old Testament passages

talking about the coming Savior, Anointed One, Messiah, or Christ - known as not only the Son of the Living God, but also by Jesus' favorite title - the "Son of Man." The combination refers to the establishment of the Final Kingdom of God and implies the Judgment and destruction of all who stand in His way this way - as the Jewish leaders are actively doing. Jesus repeatedly said back in chapter 5, essentially, "You have heard Almighty God your Father say in His Holy Word, X, but I say to you Z." Jesus often took God's Words and expanded, adapted, and applied them to Himself. Here, He was saying to His accusers, because of your decision to oppose Me, the only thing you'll see of Me in the future, is Me confirming your spot in eternal torment as those who fought against the Judge and King of all.



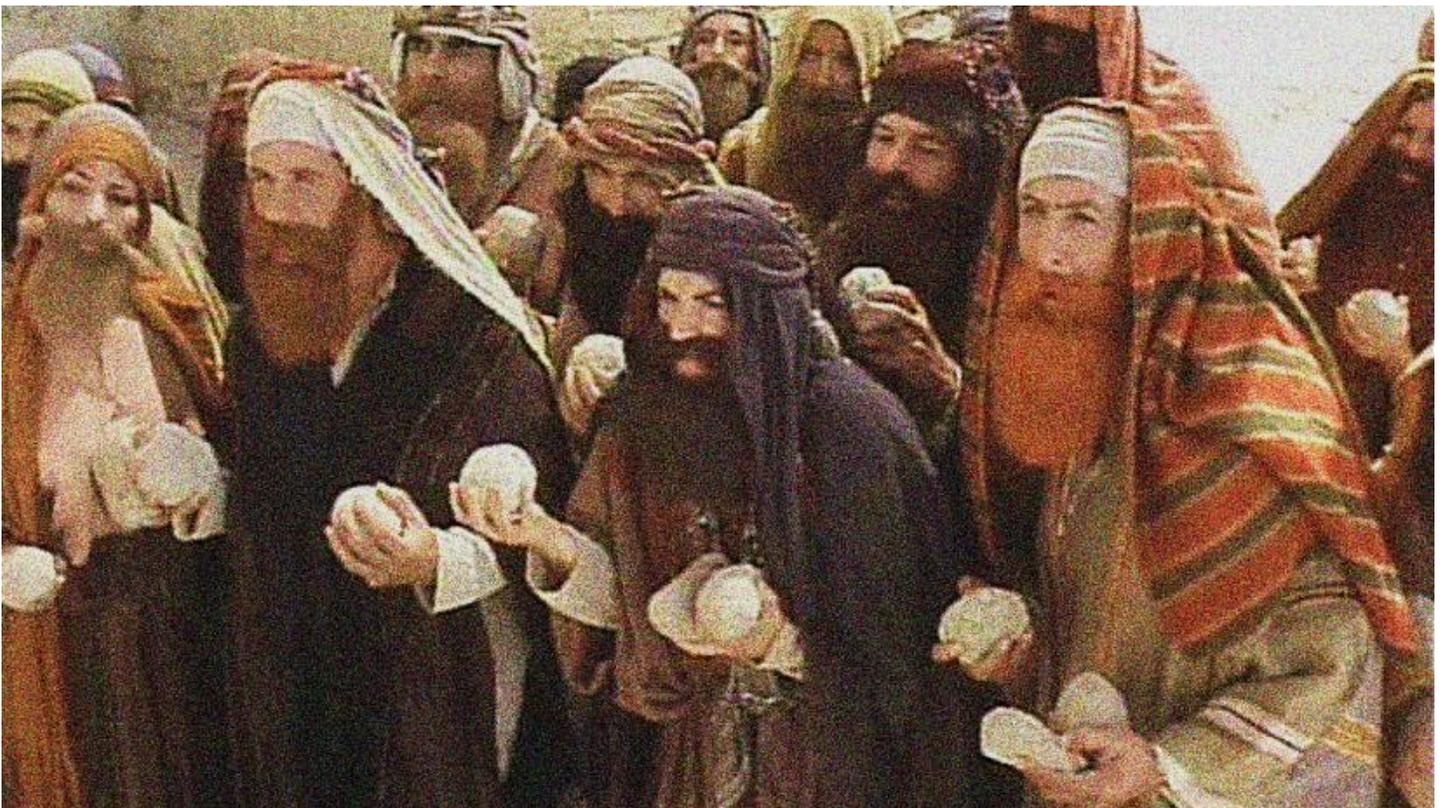
Look at the reaction of the Jewish elite - the priests, the rabbis, the elders of the people. The High Priest dramatically tore open his official High Priestly robes and screamed that Jesus had just blasphemed. He screeched that Jesus had openly cursed Almighty God in their presence.

Everyone else agreed. It was such an egregious sin that they all judged that Jesus was worthy of immediate execution... Kill the blasphemer!

What is lost on a modern audience, is something the Jews instantly understood. Jesus was not only claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah, He was claiming the

prerogatives of God for Himself. He was saying that He would have God's power and that He would rule in God's place in the Kingdom to come, and that they - the super-religious self-righteous self-assumed children of God were actually God's enemies.

That was all they needed to hear... Ultimately, they got what they wanted. Jesus incriminated Himself... by telling the Truth. Of course, their minds were already made up about Jesus and so His Truth, was seen by them as a lie confirming His guilt. Another way to say that, is no amount of Truth will change a mind that is already set against it.



Many people, from scholars to casual Bible readers, wonder why they didn't just stone Jesus right then and there. In fact, some cast doubt on the historicity of the story for that reason. Again, you have to put yourself in the situation.

Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate were already collaborators on this project. The High Priest had asked for and received a large contingent of Roman soldiers to ensure the successful arrest of Jesus. If the Jews had simply killed Him, they would have to answer to the Governor. Mostly though, it was the people they feared in this situation. Jesus was a popular guy. Kill Him at first light and by noon you'd likely have a riot on your hands, but send Him to Pilate and everything changes. Get Rome to kill Jesus for you and it's a win-win.



There is now a bit of a delay between the time of their verdict and the time the Governor will be open for business and ready to hear the case. So, people being people, they torment Jesus while they wait.

Their understanding of Jesus' words is confirmed in the sadistic game. First, they teasingly call Him Christ, which is Greek for Messiah and second, they ask Him to prophecy. They understood His claim and also understood that it was prophetic in nature.

They were essentially saying, you think you're the Messiah and that you can prophetically pronounce the future, well then tell us who just hit You.



The things the Lord endured for you are just beginning... The question as ever, is what are you going to do with that? What will you do with Jesus? Will you follow such a Savior? And just how closely will you follow Him?